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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Signal to Noise

When I first started playing drums, the challenge was finding enough credible content, whether in the form of method books, magazine articles, or instructional videos, to help me understand exactly what skills and tools I would need in order to become a professional musician. I bought whatever VHS tapes and drum methods my local music store carried, I borrowed every music history book and jazz CD my local library had available, and I practiced all of the exercises included in *Modern Drummer* each month. At times I may have gotten a bit obsessed with consuming and collecting information (did I really *need* to master a five-over-four foot ostinato?), but I never felt like I was being pulled too far off course.

These days, young drummers are navigating an entirely different landscape, one that's saturated with information that's instantly accessible via a single Google search. As amazing as the Internet is for researching and gathering up varying viewpoints on different topics, there's a good chance that you'll become overwhelmed with options to the point where you end up making less progress than if you focused on getting the most out of a single idea. The great drummer/educator Jojo Mayer touched on this concept at his recent clinic at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention. Jojo demonstrated how he applies limits to his practicing, such as adhering to a specific three-note pattern between the floor tom, snare, and kick, so that he would have to rely on dynamics to create interesting musical statements.

Another PASIC clinician, New York–based modern jazz drummer Marko Djordevic, talked about how he incorporates rules and guidelines when practicing drum solos to keep himself from falling back on habitual licks and tricks. His first rule was that he would use no preconceived patterns, grooves, or time signatures to formulate the content of his solo. Instead, he reacted and built upon whatever sounds he felt compelled to make on the kit that morning. The result on that day was an incredibly fresh, emotional, and exciting opening solo that told a unique story. In his second solo, Djordevic limited himself to a specific 5/16 riff in order to keep his ideas grounded and focused. Both examples showcased how important it is to establish rules and boundaries when engaging in the creative process to avoid chaos and confusion.

In this issue, cover artist Stella Mozgawa of the genre-melding band Warpaint also touches on the need to instill limits to one's art, which in her case goes as far as a self-imposed rule to only use her own drum samples in her SPD-SX pad so that she doesn't become creatively paralyzed from having hundreds of sound libraries at her disposal. I dig that.

Enjoy the issue!

Mike Dawson

Mike Dawson
Managing Editor

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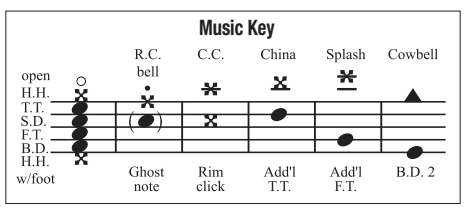

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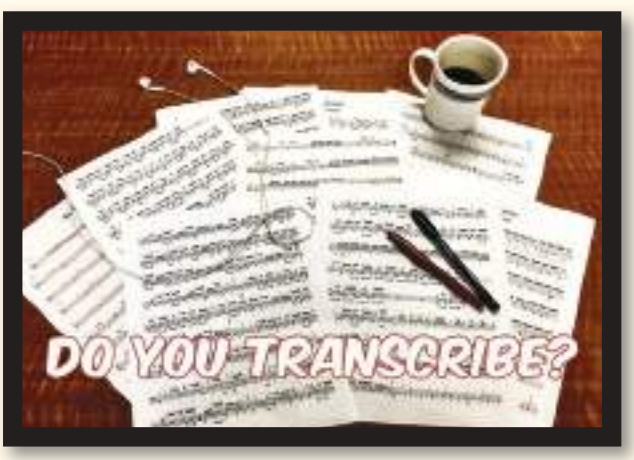
Drum Shields

I just read Bernie Schallehn's article "You're Too Loud!" (November 2016), which touched on a subject near and dear to my heart. I'm happy to say that at forty-nine years of age I have the privilege of playing drums in a Rush cover band, a Led Zeppelin cover band, an original high-energy modern-rock band, and an acoustic trio in which I play percussion. I also have a wife, a son, and a full-time job.

I say all this to make the point that I don't have time to practice much on my own, although I do spend a lot of time listening. When gigs come, I get a bit anxious and tend to hit hard. I've tried jazz sticks and multi-rods but they didn't feel or sound right. The acoustic trio is a different matter of course, but "Tom Sawyer" and "Kashmir" need a healthy crack of the snare and the crash of a nice kick and cymbal combination. Most places we play aren't big enough to get away with that, so I tried some acrylic shielding.

Our original rock band practices in a sign fabrication company's shop. The owner let me have some scrap .25"-thick pieces of clear acrylic glass that they couldn't use, so I cut them down to four two-foot by five-foot pieces. With two pieces standing together on their long edge, I made hinges using several strips of clear carton sealing tape layered on top of each piece on both sides of one edge, and then flipped them inside out to do the opposite side. You can also buy hinges, but I'm not that patient. This resulted in two separate stand-alone shields that could be placed strategically around my kit no matter what configuration I used. They fold closed and open to just under 180 degrees, so they'll stand up by themselves. They can also be leaned against a stand where they won't be in the way.

During the first few gigs it took some convincing for my bandmates to get past the "this is weird" stage. But eventually the band, our sound engineer, and ultimately our audience decided that I could be my bombastic self without the volume being so harsh. At a rock gig in a small venue, an audience member told me that, when bands play, he normally goes up to the rooftop bar because of the volume. But with my shields he didn't run off, he dug our band, and we made a new fan. And after another gig I had a sound engineer from a local recording studio comment on the shields' effectiveness.

I would strongly recommend to anyone with the same issue to try acrylic glass shields and see if they work. You can buy them in all shapes, sizes, and configurations, or, like me, you can build your own. To me it was well worth the effort, and in some cases we've had to mike my kit because it wasn't loud enough! Maybe D.T., who wrote to Bernie, will see this and give it a try. Play 'em loud and proud!
Brett Beardsley

In this month's Jazz Drummer's Workshop, educator Steve Fidyk kicks off a series on the benefits and methods of transcribing. We recently asked our social media followers to weigh in on the usefulness of writing out their favorite drummers' parts. Here are some of their responses.

If you're gigging a lot or have tons of projects going on, writing out your own charts is a must. Kenny Aronoff has talked about this. On the other hand, if you're studying a particular drummer or drum part, [transcribing] will always help your own vocabulary behind the drums because it pulls you away from your natural instincts. It forces you to become more creative.
Scott Jackson

As a drum teacher for more than twenty-five years, I get my students writing music as soon as possible. When they can write what they hear, they can conceptualize and apply their creativity to their instruments.
Ken Eidinger

I often transcribe beats or fills for my students. I do it by hand in pencil on the backs of their rudiment sheets or other exercises. Among other places, I teach at a School of Rock location. The kids are grouped into ensembles in order to perform rock covers from the 1960s to the 2010s. I find that writing out a snippet of a part is much more helpful to some students than when I play it for them, even if I go very slowly. I can often point out which notes in the transcription are essential and which they should work up to later. A simplified version that sounds okay is much better than a blank stare at a band rehearsal. It keeps the song moving.
Ryan Alexander Bloom

Even if the music I'm learning needs to be played from memory, transcribing helps me in a few ways. I'm spending more time listening intently to the music, rather than having it go in one ear and out the other. I'm also really studying the parts I'm learning by charting them. I'm getting to know intricacies that I may have glossed over.
David Anania

Transcribing a drum part allows you to get inside the drummer's mind and learn his or her groove, time feel, and fill ideas. Then you can add those elements to your vocabulary and call upon them on a gig.
Rob Diaz

Back in the old days I remember transcribing Rush drum parts. I'd take the belt off the turntable so I could use my finger to hear the part at a slow speed, and I'd write out the parts on staff paper. Man, how things have changed!
Garold Smith

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NEWS

Out Now

Jamire Williams /// Effectual

In early December jazz drummer Jamire Williams, who's backed such artists as Robert Glasper, Herbie Hancock, Christophe Chassol, and Carlos Niño, released *Effectual*, a collection of fourteen solo drum improvisations. Williams tracked with three different kits: an acoustic setup that dates back to the nineteenth century, an electronic drumset, and a hybrid rig combining the acoustic and digital sets. To capture separate emotional statements, Williams split the recordings into three sessions. A string remix by the Los Angeles–based session musician Miguel Atwood-Ferguson closes out the album.

Williams' rapid snare and ride flourishes bring emotions to a vigorous boil throughout *Effectual*'s broad range of sonic complexities. At other times, pondering bass drones prowl beneath quick, light snare and hi-hat combinations. The set represents how deep the forward-thinking drummer's creative abilities have taken him so far. "For me personally and for where I am artistically, this is a supreme statement piece," Williams says. "It's more than a record for me. This is pure art in raw form. I've said this many times, but as a drummer I see myself as a painter. I see colors, shapes, and even strokes within sonic palettes. *Effectual* evokes all of these sentiments to me, as it's stripped down yet still vibrant. It's meant to push all that it encompasses: composition, conceptual art, and of course the drums." **Willie Rose**

More New Releases

Avenged Sevenfold *Voltaic Oceans* (Brooks Wackerman)

The Rolling Stones *Blue & Lonesome* (Charlie Watts)

The Funeral Portrait *A Moment of Silence* (Stephen Danzey)

Neil Young *Peace Trail* (Jim Keltner)

The Kinks *The Mono Collection* (Mick Avory, Bobby Graham, Clem Cattini)

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

Ralph

Tobias Ralph (Adrian Belew Power Trio) and **Marco Dos Santos** (Sergio Mendes, Airto Moreira) have joined the **Innovative Percussion** roster.

Ed Davis

Abe Cunningham (Deftones) is using **Vater** drumsticks.

Buda

Jimmy K Photography

Nick Buda (Nashville studio) and **Jack Ryan** (Marcus King Band) have joined the **Noble & Cooley** roster.

On Tour

HAYLEY CRAMER WITH POP EVIL

Taking over the drum seat of an established act toward the end of an album cycle can be a daunting task for any drummer. But when that band is the Michigan rock powerhouse Pop Evil and the shows are in front of tens of thousands of people, the stakes get high fast. When British drumming phenomenon Hayley Cramer, formerly with the Brighton rockers McQueen, recently joined up with Pop Evil, she had to hit the road right away. "We had one rehearsal and then went straight out," Cramer says. "For the first couple weeks, I wasn't playing the shows—the previous drummer was. I spent the time doing soundchecks, watching the shows, and hanging out with them. It was pretty obvious that we hit it off straight away. It just felt really good for all of us."

And as Cramer revels in the excitement of her new gig and fresh endorsement deals with Zildjian Cymbals and Sakae Drums, she reflects on the band's recent performance at the 2016 Louder Than Life Festival in Louisville, Kentucky. "That was one of my favorite shows," Cramer says. "It really stands out. I also got to meet Jen [Ledger] from Skillet that day. Two British female drummers on the same bill, and we played back to back! When does that ever happen? I'll always remember that show."

Hayley Cramer is touring the U.S. with Pop Evil through February, and the band expects to release a new full-length album sometime in 2017.

Ben Meyer

Q&A

More with Hayley Cramer at **moderndrummer.com**

Also on the Road

Paul Kastick with Big Mountain
Jacob Marshall with Mae
Daniel Davison with Every Time I Die

Steve Sergent

PMC's "Roadie for a Day" Contest With Rich Redmond

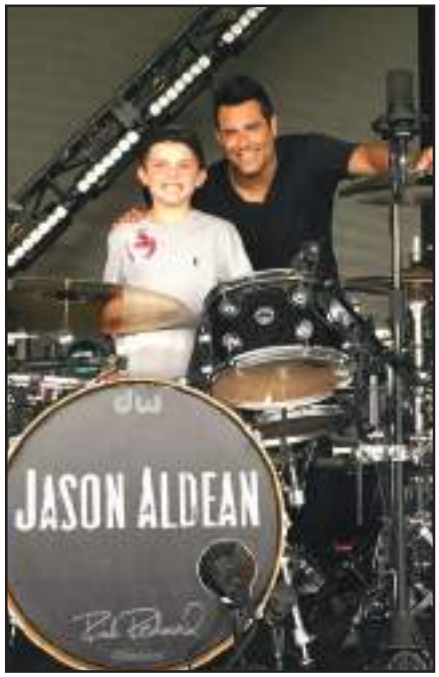
This past September 30, the Percussion Marketing Council's 2016 International Drum Month promotion culminated when eleven-year-old Henry Saad met his drum hero, Rich Redmond, prior to a Jason Aldean concert in Raleigh, North Carolina. Henry's father, Michael, entered the IDM "Drum Roadie for a Day"/all-access backstage experience contest online on behalf of his son.

The contest connects to participating percussion retailers across the country during PMC's month-long campaign. Saad's entry was selected from more than 375 others, making this year's IDM contest the most successful ever for the organization. PMC targets young, diverse audiences interested in drumming and draws them to PlayDrums.com, where they can enter the contest. From there, the drummers are directed to participating music stores and drum shops close to where they live.

Henry's day began with Redmond's CRASH Course for Success program at the lesson facility Progressive Music Center, based in Raleigh. Before the event Redmond gave Henry a thirty-minute private lesson. "It really helped kick the day off for a packed schedule," says PMC member Billy Cuthrell, founder of the Progressive Music Center, who added that later at the concert Henry got to see the inner workings of a major tour, including an inside look at how a professional drummer works on a daily basis and what it takes to reach and stay at that level.

"At every turn, Rich welcomed our son into his daily routine and shared his acquired wisdom to help guide Henry in his pursuit of a career in drums," Michael Saad says. "Henry's passion for drumming is apparent to anyone who knows him. This experience and these memories will last a lifetime. We're so grateful to the PMC, Rich Redmond, and all of the fantastic sponsors that made this day possible."

"PMC's mission is to instill excitement about playing drums and to put sticks in kids' hands," notes the group's executive director, Karl Dustman. "This promotion is one of our best vehicles to help build the drumming community and raise awareness of the fun of playing drums."



Ronn Dunnett Earns International Titanium Association's 2016 Development Award

Musician, designer, and innovator Ronn Dunnett recently received the International Titanium Association's (ITA) 2016 Application Development Award, which recognizes his work in the development and perfection of a titanium drum shell. Members of the ITA's executive board presented Dunnett with the award at Titanium USA 2016, the thirty-second annual international conference and exhibition sponsored and organized by the ITA.

The award, which includes a prize of $20,000, is intended to distinguish and remunerate work and help support the continued development of the application. "This is my Oscar, my Grammy, my Juno, my lifetime achievement award," Dunnett says. "But it's even more than that. It's the ultimate vindication. My work has never been about anything more than the relentless pursuit of quality sound. Awards, particularly in my industry, are often cynical. To receive the ITA Application Development award, especially from an organization outside of the music industry, that's as real as it gets. Recognition that says you're the leader, you were the first and the best, and who or whatever else comes after is derivative. It is an award that I am humbled by but am so proud to accept."

Dunnett has created titanium drums for many high-profile artists, including Carter Beauford, Neil Peart, Stanton Moore, Jason Bonham, John Tempesta, Vinnie Colaiuta, Todd Sucherman, Carter McLean, Jason Sutter, Matt Chamberlain, Joey Waronker, Will Calhoun, Ronald Bruner Jr., Billy Cobham, Steve Gadd, and Matt Johnson.

Zildjian Announces Scholarship Winner David Yoon

The Avedis Zildjian Company has announced that the 2016 Kerope Zildjian Scholarship winner is David Yoon from the Juilliard School. Yoon will receive a $5,000 tuition award, an expense-free trip to the Zildjian factory, and complementary cymbals. In memory of Kerope Zildjian's deep commitment to the art of craftsmanship, the Zildjian family established this scholarship to encourage and recognize outstanding student percussionists who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate music program.

Montreal Intensive Drumming Day

The third Montreal Intensive Drumming Day, a full program of teaching and coaching organized by the Quebec drummers Daniel Bédard and Stéphane Chamberland, was held this past September 3. Guest educator and *MD* cover artist Dom Famularo also taught at the event.

Chamberland discussed open-handed playing before allowing students to try the technique on his kit. Bédard played a funky Stanton Moore track and shared various double-stroke-roll exercises. Famularo closed the day with his enthusiastic and energizing approach. He discussed the concepts and current relevance of the technical pioneers George Lawrence Stone, Billy Gladstone, and Sanford Moeller, and finished with a solo that demonstrated their techniques.

Bédard, Chamberland, and Famularo wrapped up the day with a three-way drum solo, exchanging licks and smiles before a delighted crowd. A fourth edition of the event is planned for 2017.

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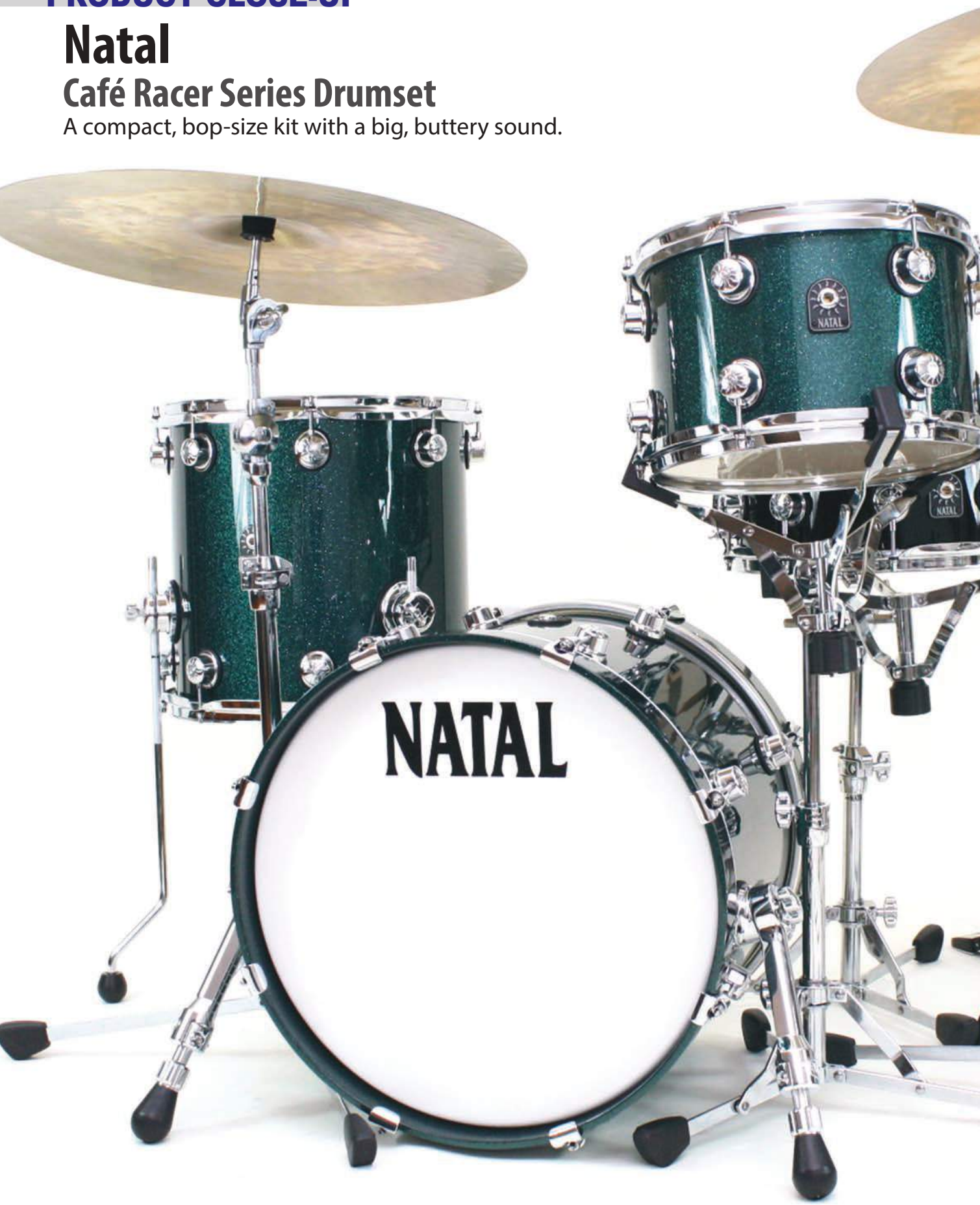

Natal was launched in 1965 by British percussionist Alan Sharp after he spent seven years assembling instruments that he wanted but couldn't find in the U.K. Sharp's fiberglass congas were favored by many top rock acts of the time, including Santana, T. Rex, Led Zeppelin, Fleetwood Mac, Deep Purple, and the Rolling Stones. Marshall Amplification purchased Natal in 2010 with the aim of expanding the brand to include a range of professional drumsets, snares, and hardware while maintaining a strong connection to the company's heritage.

Natal's initial drum catalog included metal and stave-shell snares and ply-shell drumkits made from ash, birch, maple, bubinga, and American walnut. In early 2016 the company released a new series, Café Racer, which features North American tulipwood shells. Like Natal's other ply-shell drumsets, the Café Racer is made in Taiwan but is quality-controlled by the company's team in the U.K. Tulipwood, which is also known as tulip poplar or yellow poplar, is a softer wood with a yellowish brown color, and it has been used in drum making for many years, most notably for the center ply in the highly coveted 3-ply shells made by top American companies in the 1950s and '60s.

The Components

One cool feature of Natal drums is that they all come with the same pro-quality components, including the company's distinct sun lugs, proprietary tom mounts, the multi-position Tri-Throw snare mechanism, and heavy-duty bass drum spurs. This decision results in a cohesive look across all Natal drums, regardless of price, shell type, or finish.

Our Café Racer review kit came in a classy British Racing Green Sparkle lacquer finish. (Other lacquer options for this series include Champagne Sparkle, Gold Sparkle with Black-Sparkle Stripe, and Red Sparkle with Gray Sparkle-Stripe.) Café Racer drums are available in two configurations: the US Fusion 22 comes with a 22" bass drum and 10", 12", and 14" toms, and our review kit, the Traditional Jazz, includes a 14x18 bass drum and 8x12 and 14x14 toms. The toms featured coated single-ply batters and clear single-ply bottoms. The bass drum had a clear batter with built-in muffling ring and a white-coated logo head on front.

The Café Racer shells are made from 7-ply tulipwood, which the company says has the same projection as maple but with a drier tone that leans a bit closer to that of ash. Tulipwood is also said to provide a pre-EQ'ed high end and a big, open low end. The bearing edges are hand-finished and feature a slightly rounded 45-degree profile.

In Action

Natal's Café Racer kit has a familiar sound and feel to vintage American drums, minus the quirkiness in tuning, drumhead fit, and hardware quality that can sometimes plague older instruments. At higher tunings, like those often used in classic jazz and R&B, the Café Racer drums had a clear, pure tone with a buttery attack and short but balanced decay. Tuned lower, the toms and kick provided deep low end, a doughy attack, and warm, rich tones that decayed quickly and smoothly.

The 18" bass drum produced plenty of depth and punch to function comfortably as a stand-in for a larger 20" or 22" drum on gigs with cramped stages. And the 12" and 14" toms quickly morphed from a precise, melodic Tony Williams–type bebop tone into a deep, studio-ready "doom" with a half turn of the tuning rods.

The hardware on the Café Racer drumset is identical to that on other Natal professional-level kits and is designed to be ultra-sturdy, simple to use, and unobtrusive. The bass drum spurs are a bit beefier than standard off-the-shelf varieties. They held the drum firmly in place, even when I buried the beater into the head and kicked the pedal hard. The rack tom mount attaches to two of the lug casings and suspends the shell for unencumbered resonance without obscuring too much of the cool British Racing Green Sparkle lacquer finish. Natal also added some nice subtle touches, like hollowing out the wing nuts on the tom mounts, spurs, and floor tom brackets, to remind you that this isn't just another off-the-factory-floor drumset. This is the real deal.

Michael Dawson

Paiste

Signature Rides

Distinctive tones crafted for some of the top drummers on the company's roster.

This past year Paiste collaborated with some of its top artists to craft a handful of unique cymbals. These new models include the 20" Signature Vir2ocity Duo ride for prog-rock legend Carl Palmer, the purple-finished 22" Signature Dry Heavy ride for Tool's Danny Carey, the 24" 2002 Swish ride for studio great John "JR" Robinson, and the 20" Masters Mellow "Blue Bird" ride for French jazz drummer André Ceccarelli. Let's check them out.

20" Signature Vir2ocity Duo

A 1989 inductee into the *Modern Drummer* hall of fame, British drummer Carl Palmer is one of the pioneers of the adventurous, over-the-top progressive rock style that emerged in the 1970s. His creative drumming with Emerson, Lake and Palmer (ELP) and Asia remains highly regarded for its blend of jazz-inspired technical virtuosity and dramatic arena-rock bombast.

Palmer's 20" Signature Vir2ocity Duo ride features two playing zones. The area of the bow near the bell is raw and unlathed to provide a high-pitched ping. The outer region is hammered, lathed, and polished to produce deeper overtones while remaining clear and articulate. The bell is lathed and polished and possesses a loud, piercing, and separated sound.

This is a heavy ride cymbal that's designed for louder situations. The stick sound is strong and defined, and the wash is tight and controlled. Even when hit hard with large sticks, the sustain stays in check, so the articulation remains super-clear. The difference in tone and clarity between the inner and outer sections of the bow is subtle but noticeable. And the bell has a very stout and satisfying sound.

22" Signature Dry Heavy

Tool's Danny Carey cites Carl Palmer as one of his biggest influences, so it comes as no surprise that his 22" Signature series Dry Heavy ride is also designed to provide maximum articulation, controlled wash, and a strong, separated bell. Compared to Palmer's cymbal, Carey's ride—which features a

cool purple finish for a distinctive look—has a stronger attack, and the wash is a touch more complex while remaining focused and contained. (The Vir2ocity ride has a breathier undertone, whereas Danny's ride has a denser, tighter timbre.) I was able to easily articulate quick double strokes at all volumes on Carey's signature ride; there was minimal wash to blur the attack. And jumping from the bow to the bell produced two powerful and clearly defined tones. This ride would have no problem cutting through the most intense, dense mixes.

24" 2002 Swish

This medium-weight swish ride, designed for studio legend JR Robinson, is made from Paiste's famous b8 2002 bronze. The b8 alloy gives this cymbal a medium-bright timbre with silvery high-end overtones, while the 24" diameter, subtly upturned edge, flat bell, and rivets contribute to its exotic, complex character. This cymbal has a massive sound that can swell from a rumble to a roar when played with mallets, or it can be struck forcefully with sticks for an explosive, trashy crash. When played on the bow, you get a funky, Mel Lewis–style tone that drives the music with more energy and complexity than a regular ride. The bell has a subtle and integrated tone that blends with the trashy sustain rather than cutting above it. If you play a lot of heavy shuffles, or if you need an alternative sound to stoke the fire when the intensity level rises, give this big guy a try.

20" Masters Mellow "Blue Bird"

This medium-light Masters series ride was designed with French jazz drummer André Ceccarelli and is meant for subtler playing that lives mostly in the lower end of the dynamic spectrum. It has a long, warm, and airy sustain, a smooth and clean stick attack, and a deep and integrated bell tone. It's hammered extensively to bring out more complexity without losing clarity. This is a silky, smooth ride with a soft and buttery feel, a mellow and pleasant sustain, and a rich bell. Fast, delicate ride patterns sparkled with a musical voice, and the Blue Bird can be pushed a bit harder to get a wider texture without the sound becoming overwhelmed with excessive wash. The Blue Bird ride also doubled well as a big crash in louder backbeat-oriented applications where I needed a complex vintage-type tone that wouldn't choke out when hit with more aggressive strokes.

Michael Dawson

Roland

KT-9 and FD-9 Kick and Hi-Hat Controllers

Finally! Near-noiseless pedals for a quieter e-drum experience.

Acoustic drums are loud. But even electronic drums, which are often marketed as quieter alternatives to acoustic kits, can cause problems, especially for apartment-dwelling drummers with neighbors living below them. Mesh heads and soft-rubber pads do a lot to cut down on the stick sound, but it's most often the floor vibrations caused by the impact of the kick pedal striking a pad that gets us in trouble. Roland sought to mitigate that issue with its new beater-less KT-9 kick pedal and noiseless FD-9 hi-hat controller. We received one of each to review. Let's give them a try.

KT-9 Kick Pedal

The KT-9 kick pedal ($149) is super-compact, measuring about 14.5" long, 5.5" wide, and 6.25" high near the toe stop. It weighs just over 4.5 lbs. The pedal can be used with any Roland sound module that accepts .25" trigger inputs. The trigger sensor is placed beneath the footboard, and it sends a signal through the cable each time the footboard makes contact.

The ultra-smooth action of the KT-9 pedal is created with a patent-pending link mechanism and two springs affixed to the side of the bracket. The springs are removable, so you can quickly change the tension of the footboard by removing or adding one of them. You can also give the pedal a heavier feel by screwing an included small weight to the underside of the footboard.

We tested the KT-9 with an older SPD-S sample pad, as well as with new SPD-SX and TM-2 modules. Aside from the time it took to assign a sound to the trigger input that the pedal was attached to, the KT-9 worked perfectly right away. It took a bit of practice to get familiar with how the KT-9 reacted to my technique, but I was eventually able to execute just about everything I could on a regular bass drum pedal. The KT-9 also features an anchor bolt that can be engaged to keep the pedal stable under heavier playing.

When comparing the volume output of a regular pedal hitting an electronic pad to that of the KT-9, the KT-9 wins out by a large

margin. Roland claims that the KT-9 reduces the sound in the room by 85 percent and the sound that transfers below by 63 percent. While we weren't able to verify those figures scientifically, the difference is night and day. And because the KT-9 is so compact, live drummers using hybrid electronic/acoustic kits will have a lot more positioning flexibility for incorporating this pedal within their setups.

FD-9 Hi-Hat Controller

While not offering as drastic a reduction in sound, Roland's FD-9 hi-hat controller is still significantly quieter than the company's standard FD-8 hi-hat controller, providing 50 percent sound reduction and 15 percent less floor noise, according to Roland. The pedal is designed identically to the KT-9, but the sensor is placed near the heel hinge to allow it to track how far down the footboard is depressed for a realistic response to open, closed, partially open, and heel splash techniques.

As long as your sound module has a hi-hat controller input (an SPD-SX does not, but an older SPD-S and an OCTAPAD SPD-30 does), then the FD-9 will work perfectly with little or no additional adjustments being required. It also operated nearly silently, even when I was chomping heavy 8th notes using a heel-up technique. Again, for e-drummers living in close proximity to others, the amount of sound reduction the FD-9 provides makes it well worth the $149 price for the upgrade.

Roland also offers NE-10 Noise Eater isolation boards ($99.99) and NE-1 isolation feet ($29.99) to bring down the sound level even further.

Michael Dawson

Gibraltar

Beat EFX Bass Pedal Enhancers

Compact beater attachments to add subtle shaker, jingle, and finger-cymbal sounds.

Always looking to introduce unique accessory items to its catalog, Gibraltar developed a trio of bass drum beater attachments that add an extra layer of sound to every stroke. The Beat EFX enhancers are constructed using a small hard-plastic mounting bracket and a drum key–operated screw, which serves dual purposes of holding the shaker, finger cymbal, and tambourine jingles in place and tightening them on to the beater rod. List price is $45.99 for the set.

How They Work

Attaching the Beat EFX is straightforward and simple. Simply twist the bracket onto the beater shaft, position the Beat EFX wherever you like, and tighten the screw with a drum key. When you reattach the beater to your pedal, be careful to position the Beat EFX facing away from the drum so that the attachment doesn't smack into the drumhead.

The bracket on the Beat EFX is designed to grab on both sides of the beater shaft, which means it won't fall off or fly away if the screw comes loose. Incidentally, the Beat EFX never budged throughout our testing period. While we had no problem adding and removing the Beat EFX from the beater quickly between songs to get different sounds, you may be better off carrying spare beaters with the attachments already in place to make the changeovers even easier.

How They Sound

The subtlest sounding Beat EFX is the egg shaker. When playing the bass drum at full volume, the shaker effect is hard to hear. But when playing lightly, you can create a cool earthy texture of rhythm beneath every stroke. Depending on how you manage the backswing of the beater, you can effectively play two 8th notes or 16th notes for every stroke. Quick, syncopated bass drum figures can sound a bit chaotic with the shaker Beat EFX attached, so you'll need to be strategic and sparse with your bass drum note placement. Less is definitely more in this case.

The tambourine Beat EFX has four metal jingles that move freely on a 1" rod. The jingle sound is more pronounced than that of the shaker version, but the two-for-one reaction is the same. You get a strong, fairly short jingle every time you strike the drum, followed by a slightly softer and less defined sound on the backswing. I found this attachment to be most effective when playing very simple bass drum patterns, like four on the floor, so I could closely monitor the rhythm of the beater moving forward and backward to create an even layer of 8ths or 16ths. I also had fun experimenting with playing the pedal without striking the drum to activate the jingles by themselves.

The finger cymbal attachment is the most esoteric of the three. It features two 2" bronze cymbals separated by a spring that keeps them spaced betweexn strokes. Every time the beater hits the drum, the finger cymbals clash together to produce a bright, high-pitched "ding." When used sparingly, the finger cymbal Beat EFX provides an interesting bell-like tone that contrasts with the deep tone of the bass drum. Though the Beat EFX enhancers might have limited applications on a primary bass drum pedal, they would be a nice choice for adding an extra layer of texture on auxiliary kick drums and percussion instruments that can be played with a pedal, like a cajon, cowbell, or woodblock.

Michael Dawson

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Korn's Ray Luzier

Over the past ten years, Korn's drummer has become an increasingly integral component of the band's uniquely heavy sound. The latest raging slab of proof coming out of Bakersfield, California: *The Serenity of Suffering*.

Now that original Korn guitarist Brian "Head" Welch is back in the lineup, Ray Luzier says that the band's unrelenting sound is musically deeper and lyrically darker than ever. "As a session guy for years, I've played with a lot of schooled musicians," Luzier tells *MD*. "But these four original members have been playing together for twenty-two years, and they've taken my playing to a whole different level—not in a technical way, but by making me feel like a part of something bigger than me. Korn has a magical approach to the simplicity of what we do, which sets us apart and appeals to the masses."

After touring nonstop for the past four years, the group was primed for the studio. "We were totally locked in and ready to unleash the new Korn music," Luzier says. "Having Nick Raskulinecz [Foo Fighters, Rush, Mastodon] producing really helped capture the revitalized Korn sound. We recorded between Nashville and Bakersfield, in the original Buck Owens studio, which Korn now owns. The goal was to create a heavy, old-school Korn vibe without being too nostalgic, and Nick really helped make that happen.

"Nick made us play together in the studio," Luzier explains, "which we hadn't previously done. And he asked to tune my drums, which a producer has never done before. He also helped me break a habit that I've incorporated in my playing since I was ten. It's a percussive upbeat on the hi-hat that I've played on every recording for thirty years. No producer has ever told me what to play. It forced me to really focus on my playing and made the songs feel so much better."

Before you get the idea that Luzier's hands were somehow tied, though, consider the album's first single and video, "Rotting in Vain." "I played some wacky over-the-bar fill that Nick finally approved," Ray says with a chuckle. "Now when we play that song live, I see guys air drumming to that fill. That really makes me feel like I've accomplished something special."

Luzier is also excited about the impending second album by his "other" band, KXM, which features bassist/vocalist Dug Pinnick of King's X and guitarist George Lynch of Lynch Mob. "We went into the studio in early 2016 and created thirteen songs in twelve days straight," Luzier says. "It's a darker record than the first. It's really heavy and very soulful, with Dug's amazing vocals leading the way."

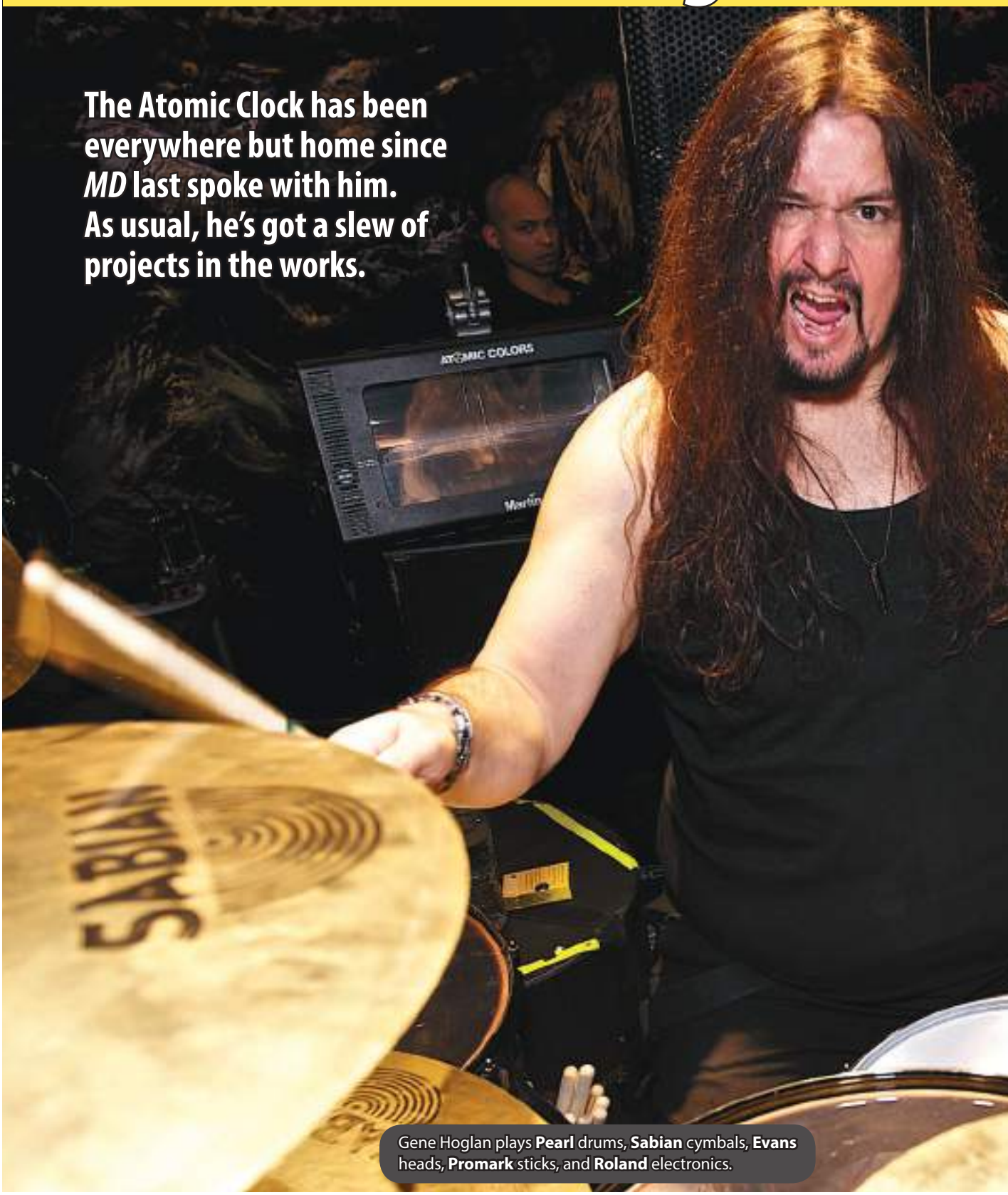
Ray Luzier plays **Pearl** drums, **Sabian** cymbals, and **LP** percussion, and he uses **Vic Firth** sticks, **DW** hardware, **Humes & Berg** cases, and **Remo** heads.

While the ever-active Luzier, who's forty-six years old, acknowledges a need to slow down with the passing of time, fans aren't likely to notice any change in his performance level—a notion that he places firmly at the doorstep of Korn. "I used to think that by the time I was forty, I'd be teaching in a music school," Luzier admits. "And I do hit a little lighter now and try to pace myself. But when I hit the stage, I get into a zone, the music takes over, and the passion drives me. Being in Korn has really been a dream come true." **Mike Haid**

Sébastien Paquet

Testament's Gene Hoglan

The Atomic Clock has been everywhere but home since *MD* last spoke with him. As usual, he's got a slew of projects in the works.



Gene Hoglan plays **Pearl** drums, **Sabian** cymbals, **Evans** heads, **Promark** sticks, and **Roland** electronics.

At the top of the list of famed metal drummer Gene Hoglan's latest projects is Testament's *Brotherhood of the Snake*, the legendary thrash band's first studio album since 2012's *Dark Roots of Earth*. When the players entered the studio, some were hearing the songs, which were written by guitarist Eric Peterson, for the first time. Hoglan is no stranger to learning material and recording it in the same day, though, and has the ability to make it sound as though the parts are well rehearsed.

From a drummer's perspective, the *Brotherhood* tracks had an unusual birth. According to Hoglan, "Eric demoed the songs with drummer Alex Bent from his other band, Dragonlord, while I was off doing other projects, telling him to play in my style. Eric became accustomed to some of the demo drum parts, so the only real challenge for me was convincing him to let me do my thing, instead of me copying parts that were supposed to sound like me in the first place."

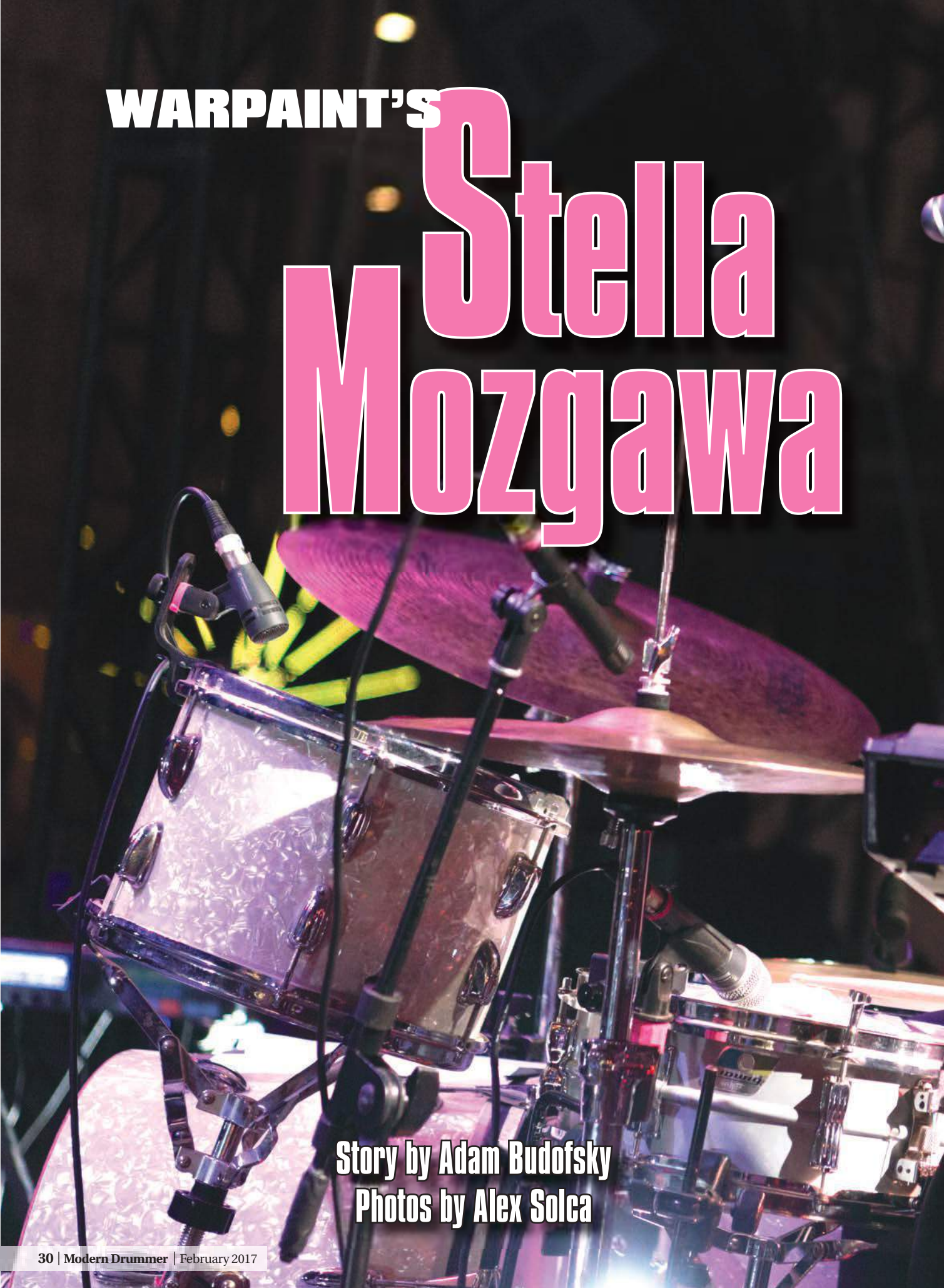
Hoglan will spend most of 2017 on the road with Testament, but he also hopes to tour with Brendon Small (Dethklok, Galaktikon) in support of *Galaktikon II*. The day after the Testament record was complete, Hoglan was back in the studio, tracking with Small. For legal reasons Dethklok is no more; meanwhile, Galaktikon began as a side venture that showcased Small's more melodic material. "Brendon's project had to evolve away from the Dethklok name," Hoglan says, "but I tell you, we went into it essentially tracking a Dethklok record."

Hoglan is also working on a new Dark Angel album, for which he contributes about half of the songs' guitar parts in addition to playing drums. Due to his constant touring schedule and more immediate obligations, the process has been slow. Meanwhile, the drummer has been working on music with his fiancé, guitarist Laura Christine, which he describes as "probably the most savage project I have in the works."

While on the road, Hoglan hopes to squeeze in some clinics to promote his new DVD, *The Clock Strikes 2*. The set features play-alongs from his work with Testament, Meldrum, Strapping Young Lad, Galaktikon, and singer/guitarist Chuck Schuldiner's iconic band, Death. Longtime fans will be amazed by how Hoglan, as a predominately heel-up player, effortlessly began employing heel-down technique. "I noticed I had a lot more power and control when playing really hauling passages," Gene explains, "and I have to admit that I felt it was a little easier on my legs because I'm resting my heels. It's been forever since I've been able to sit and practice, but I'm pretty attuned to my body, and I'm able to tell it what to do—and it seems to listen."

For more with Hoglan, including how to get his new DVD, go to hoglanindustries.com.

David Ciauro



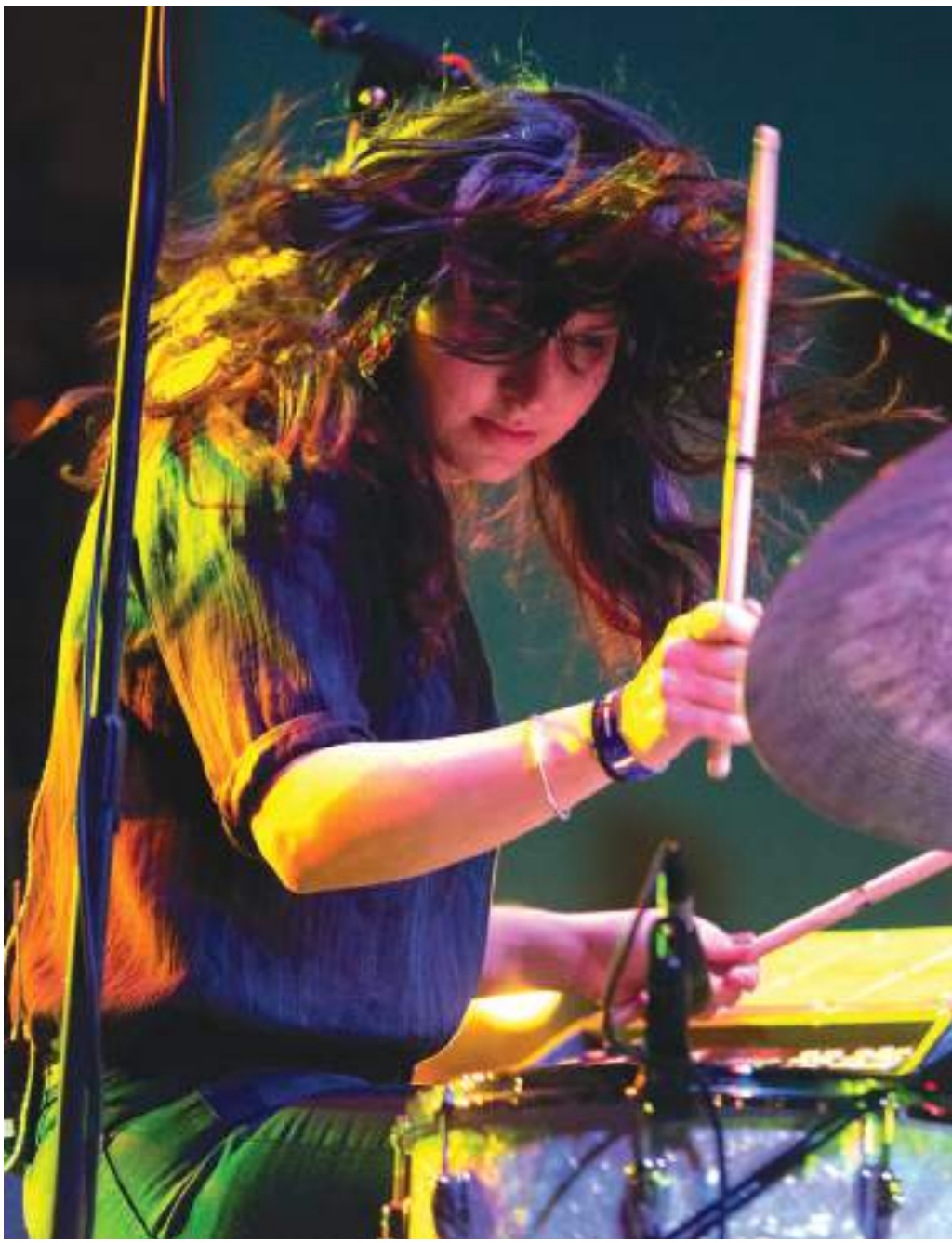
WARPAINT'S Stella Mozgawa

Story by Adam Budofsky
Photos by Alex Solca

If the dominant theme of drumming in the twenty-first century is the blurring of lines—playing versus programming, online versus on stage, tradition versus exploration, band membership versus freelance work—then here is a player who stands tall as a gleaming reminder that each of us can, and should, have it both ways, at every turn.

Stella Mozgawa does more than cover the requisite demands of the contemporary drummer. She does so in a way that transcends recognized borders. This allows listeners to experience the music she makes—particularly with her band, Warpaint—in an analysis-free zone, one where the job of grooving mightily is not compromised by digital technology but enhanced by it. While Warpaint's music is in a constant state of flux, matters of the head and the heart are always addressed in equal measure. Mozgawa consistently plays it slinky *and* smart. She offers endlessly good-feeling grooves that owe as much to the timeless tug and throb of R&B architects Bernard Purdie and James Gadson as they do to the fractured-loop mindset of rhythm futurists like Aphex Twin and Autechre. She's that rare thing in modern music: a stylist, with an idiosyncratic and recognizable sound.

Then again…she's kind of not that at all. Though Mozgawa is generally recognized for her membership in Warpaint, the spacey L.A. indie-dance band that also features bassist/singer Jenny Lee Lindberg and guitarist/singers Emily Kokal and Theresa Wayman, the list of musical mavericks whose records and tours she's contributed to is as diverse as it is impressive. You need only listen to a random selection of tracks that Stella's played on to quickly marvel at the breadth of her abilities. Try these for starters: Flea's skittery 6/8 instrumental "A Little Bit of Sanity," Kurt Vile's Topanga Canyon–era chiller "Wakin on a Pretty Day," Andy Clockwise's garage burner "Everybody's in a Band," SBTRKT's woozy post-trip-hop track "Voices in My Head," Soko's bare and breathy "We Might Be Dead by Tomorrow," and Cate Le Bon's tumbling and trippy "Wonderful." In each case, Mozgawa reads the room and offers perfectly in-tune commentary. And she never bores—but she



never distracts either. Who *wouldn't* want her on their track?

Still, Warpaint would seem to be Mozgawa's ideal canvas. Since replacing Lindberg's sister, Shannyn Sossamon, who left in 2008 to concentrate on her burgeoning acting career, the drummer has eagerly accompanied her bandmates in their conscious evolution toward more detailed, experimental, and groove-oriented sonic expressions. As comfortable playing the roles of arranger and sound designer as she is reimagining classic Steely Dan and Led Zeppelin drum tracks for a new millennium, Mozgawa-the-total-artist comes to the fore with Warpaint, as fun to listen to for her thoughtful rhythm work as she is to watch for her shimmying, slamming performance style.

After witnessing an inspiring gig at Brooklyn's Warsaw recently, this writer didn't know what to do first when he got back home to his own kit—remove half his cymbals (Stella squeezes ample sounds out of a simple ride/hi-hat setup), set up a full-length mirror to try to emulate her wholly engaging body-rocking moves, or cue up some Sugarhill Gang, slap on the headphones, and work on Stella-style beat-smithery, in an attempt to better understand the Mozgawa drumming mindset.

Several hours earlier, though, at a coffee shop down the street from the club, *MD* was getting to know Mozgawa the person. Self-assured but warm and funny, tall and athletic though not imposing, articulate yet interested in *your* take on things, Stella comes across as equal parts professional craftsperson and wide-eyed artist. We began our conversation by exploring some of the intriguing ways unexpected combinations such as these inform Warpaint's latest album, *Heads Up*.

"Got My Girls, I'm Not Alone"*

MD: Warpaint is experimental and beat-oriented, but unlike a lot of avant-garde electronic dance music, for instance, much of the experimentation comes from a performance place, rather than just from postproduction.

Stella: Warpaint is my favorite kind of music to listen to. I think the interesting thing about this band is that there's no lead singer and no real leader. It kind of transfers at every moment, and in every song. And that breeds so many different ways of doing things. So making every song is like creating something new.

MD: *Heads Up* was created a bit differently from your last album, right?

Stella: I began playing with the band in late 2009, and we started recording *The Fool* in the fall of 2010. Most of the record was already written before I joined, though there were holes in terms of the drumming and the synth parts.

For my second album with the band, *Warpaint*, we went to Joshua Tree for a month and lived in this geodesic dome where we set up a little studio, and we wrote most of that record then. It was very much a communal experience in that we were all making space for each other to explore ideas simultaneously.

For *Heads Up*, we sort of happened on this technique that was healthier for us, which involved everyone being able to flesh out an idea maybe 60 percent of the way, and then getting everyone else or one other person to fill in the other 40 percent. So everyone gets to express themselves as much as they want.

A song might be deconstructed and then reconstructed later with all of us in the room together. But nothing was reimagined to a point of shock. So, for example, Theresa had a semi-demo for "By Your Side," the second song on the record. I came in and assisted on the rhythmic side and helped construct the second half of it, and then took the end of the song home and remixed it there. So it went through a few filters, and I felt that I could do whatever I wanted to.

I feel like everyone felt that way too. Whereas when you're in the room with everyone, sometimes you kind of stop yourself from suggesting things, like, "There's a lot of dominant energy here, and I don't want to add to the noise." We're all very strong personalities. Our last producer, Flood, said that we're like a democracy of dictators, which is very true.

MD: Band psychology is so interesting. I just started playing with some very old friends again, and…

Stella: …do you see yourself locking into old patterns? Like, "I only have that relationship with you—you bring that out in me."

MD: A bit, yeah, for better or worse. But at the same time it's good because unspoken musical things happen automatically.

Stella: That's so special. I think the most exciting aspect anthropologically, emotionally, and philosophically about playing in a band is exactly what you're talking about. The music is kind of secondary in a way, because you're in this pressure-cooker environment, and it's not like being in a relationship with one other person. It's truly like a family, but also like a marriage. All those lines are blurred—so crazy.

MD: Yeah, it's been a little demanding.

Stella: But worth it, right? I do feel that since joining this band and since kind of committing myself to collaborating with people, I've had an accelerated learning curve. I'm an only child. I had family friends and such, but there were gaps in my upbringing in terms of learning how to coexist with people. And now I love and thrive on that energy. It's this bigger-picture thing that I think is more fascinating than music alone.

When you have four or five people who simultaneously are trying to enact and manifest their dreams, their deepest creative desires and impulses, together at the same time—it's crazy! Sometimes it's really hard. But when you create something in that situation, it's unique. And you can be proud and think, like you said, *I don't have this relationship with anyone else.* It's kind of an extension of your affection for people and the things that you like about them. Because everything they play is an extension of their personality, so it's kind of a celebration of people and of community.

Electronic Thrills

MD: The first song on *Heads Up*, "Whiteout," is a neat indication of your playing and song-constructing style. I like how the woodblock-sounding rhythm at the beginning is re-voiced on the snare.

> *"Drumming is endlessly more interesting than it was back in the day—the feeling of creating something rather than executing something is really rewarding."*

Stella: That's actually an electronic beat, and I'm playing live drums over it.

MD: Are there two different snare drums on that cut?

Stella: It's actually three—two in the electronic beat, which is something that Theresa programmed, and then I played over it. We did this long-form substitution where we tried sometimes only the electronic beat, with me maybe playing other instruments or percussion, and other times just drums. When we put them together, it sounded full and interesting in a way that's kind of busy, but the way that they interact is interesting.

MD: The ability to balance electronic sounds and the acoustic ones is something that Warpaint excels at.

Stella: It's pretty wily sometimes. I love making electronic music on my own. Theresa is especially into that kind of stuff. If we like the sound of something, we go with it. And I find that as thrilling as playing the drums.

MD: As great as some electronic music is, having live instrumentalists involved can really elevate it. Is that part of the way the band thinks?

Stella: Definitely. Something that kind of led me to bridging the gap between playing the drums and programming them on a computer or a drum machine or sequencer was a song on the last album, "Hi." We had a few shows while we were in the preproduction process, and I started playing it on my SPD-SX pad, and I realized that I was getting these grooves that had the

**Lyric from "By Your Side."*

spirit of playing in the moment, but using sounds that are often only used in a rigid, loop type of environment. I love those sounds, but I don't want to play my kit and get it to sound like a 909. I'd rather just use a 909, or put 909 sounds on a sampling pad and play it like a human being, where you hear mistakes and variations, exactly the same as you would if you were playing it on a drumkit. That [distinction] is really important to me. So that's part of my toolbox now.

MD: It's not easy to blend electronic and acoustic sounds well.

Stella: I'm still developing it. It has a lot to do with mixing, and a lot to do with being conscious of not stepping on someone else's toes. We only want to bring something to the table that's going to elevate whatever's already there or honor it in some kind of way. And sometimes it's hard to bring in those electronic elements and not have it shit all over the acoustic stuff. It's not respectful to be like, "Look at all these new toys I got from Native Instruments!" So just trying to be tasteful is number one. And I know the kinds of sounds I'm attracted to and the things I don't like as much.

MD: So is that part of your approach, having a somewhat limited palette?

Stella: Yeah, definitely. I like the idea of creating my own samples, and I'm very particular about what I put into my SPD-SX pad, instead of having every drum machine ever made in there so I can pick and choose and make Frankenstein kits. With modern technology you can drive yourself crazy over the number of options. It can steer you away from focusing on a sound that will be known as yours.

MD: There are so many more choices to reject now.

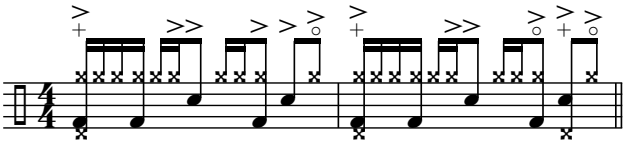
Stella: Right. Everyone has the ADD gene now, especially creatively. So I think it's more important now to have limitations in terms

Mozgawa on Record

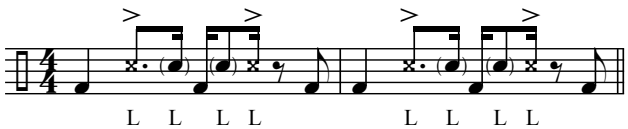
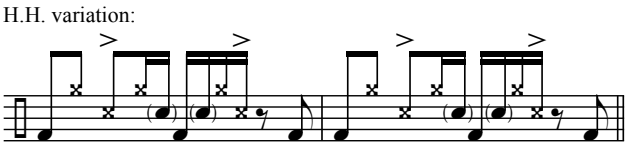
Stella Mozgawa's inventive approach stokes a cool, intense burn underneath Warpaint's dreamy brand of indie rock. Creative grooves mix electronic elements with catchy, syncopated accents. Powerful fills land confidently *without* a crash on the 1. And the drummer turns the heat up with huge, engulfing feels. Here we explore select cuts from the band's most recent record, *Heads Up*, and 2010's *The Fool*, with Mozgawa adding commentary.

"Whiteout" (*Heads Up*)

Hi-hat accents slash through a lively broken-16th-note pattern on this meditative opener. "There's a syncopated drum machine loop running in the background," Mozgawa says. "I'm playing more of a driving, randomized 16th-note pattern over the top. I'm kind of supporting the initial groove and building the dynamics of the song by ducking in and out of focus."

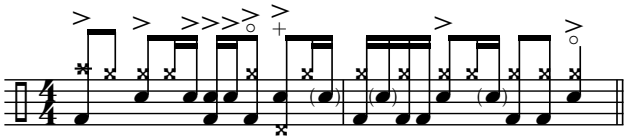


"The Stall" (*Heads Up*)

In the first verse of this brooding cut, Mozgawa plays ghost notes with the left hand on the drumhead in between rimclick backbeats. "I totally stole Bernard Purdie's finger caress on this one," she explains. "I tend to write a lot of these kinds of beats. I love techno music, so it's important to me to have more of an interesting variation on a beat if it's going to remain relatively constant. There's a lot you can do to add color.



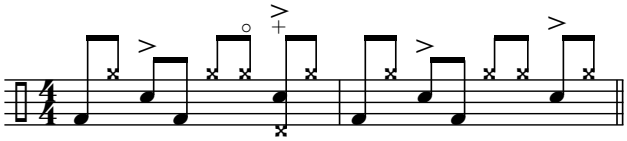
"Don't Let Go" (*Heads Up*)

Mozgawa channels John Bonham with slightly distorted drums and a massive groove that stomps through this tune at 1:07. "We didn't think we could pull off a classic Bonham sound in our makeshift studio—our rehearsal space—but I think we came pretty close," Stella says. "The song called for something languid and spacious, and Jen had a very similar vision for the tones she wanted to hear. Sometimes that decision is so natural you just have to go with it."



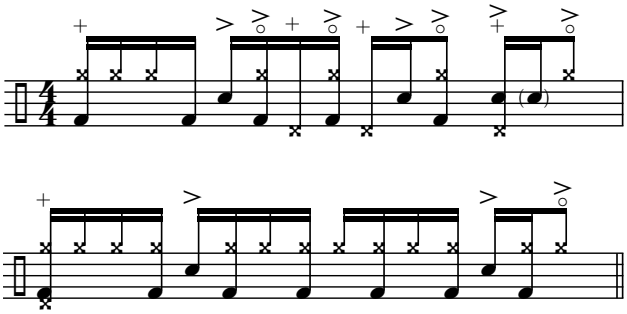
"Heads Up" (*Heads Up*)

This upbeat, broken-8th hi-hat groove recalls bands such as the Cure when it enters at 1:43, and tom fills accentuate the pattern. "This one has a little bit of percussion/trash can overdubbing," Mozgawa says. "But I'm primarily playing a set of Rototoms in the take. I can't remember precisely what was overdubbed or not, but I can tell you that re-creating all those parts live has been fun and wonderfully challenging."



"Warpaint" (*The Fool*)

This killer 16th-note hi-hat groove tears into the second cut off Warpaint's first full-length LP around the 2:00 mark, with driving and catchy open hi-hat accents. "The syncopated kick drum that kind of slows down the beat is another techno rip-off," Mozgawa explains. "It adds some tension and discomfort as opposed to simply 'feeling' faster or busier. And I love fills that carry over past beat 1 of the next bar, or the downbeat of any bar. That's my favorite trick. I love simplicity when there's a level of cheekiness involved. I'm not sure if that's necessarily relevant to this particular song, but it's my favorite thing about listening to drummers."



Transcriptions and text by Willie Rose

of time, sound, and technology, and you kind of have to put that on yourself. Otherwise you'll find yourself exhausted from watching three hours of tutorial videos on YouTube, and you've not done anything creative. It's a constant struggle for a lot of people making music today.

Almost Famous

MD: Do you have a desire to be recognized by the drummers in the house?

Stella: When I was younger I did. There were two elements that kind of bred that urgency, that need for acceptance—which is an important thing to have when you're young and starting out. First, you've got to have a goal, and mine was just to prove that I was good at it. And there weren't a lot of girl drummers out there—though that's something that I don't care about much anymore, because I feel the whole landscape has changed so much.

The second thing was that it was very fringe to make money being a musician in Sydney, Australia, especially as a professional session drummer. My parents were musicians, and though it felt like a possibility that I was going to make money out of it, it wasn't a very *good* possibility. There were maybe four full-time working session drummers.

MD: Why was that?

Stella: The scarcity of resources. The lower population. Less interest in the arts and less of the foundation of a creative state. L.A. is based around the entertainment industry. So everyone goes there because there's work there. Whereas in Australia it's very much about sports and commerce, and art is kind of an afterthought. And I was lucky—I grew up in a comparatively good moment in Australian history. We had a great music program at my school. There were multiple bands: a wind orchestra, a jazz band, rock bands. But it was still kind of weird to think of myself as wanting to be a professional musician. It just felt kind of impossible. But I desperately wanted to do it, and I knew I wouldn't be able to start when I was thirty. I wanted to start early.

MD: So when was that moment when…

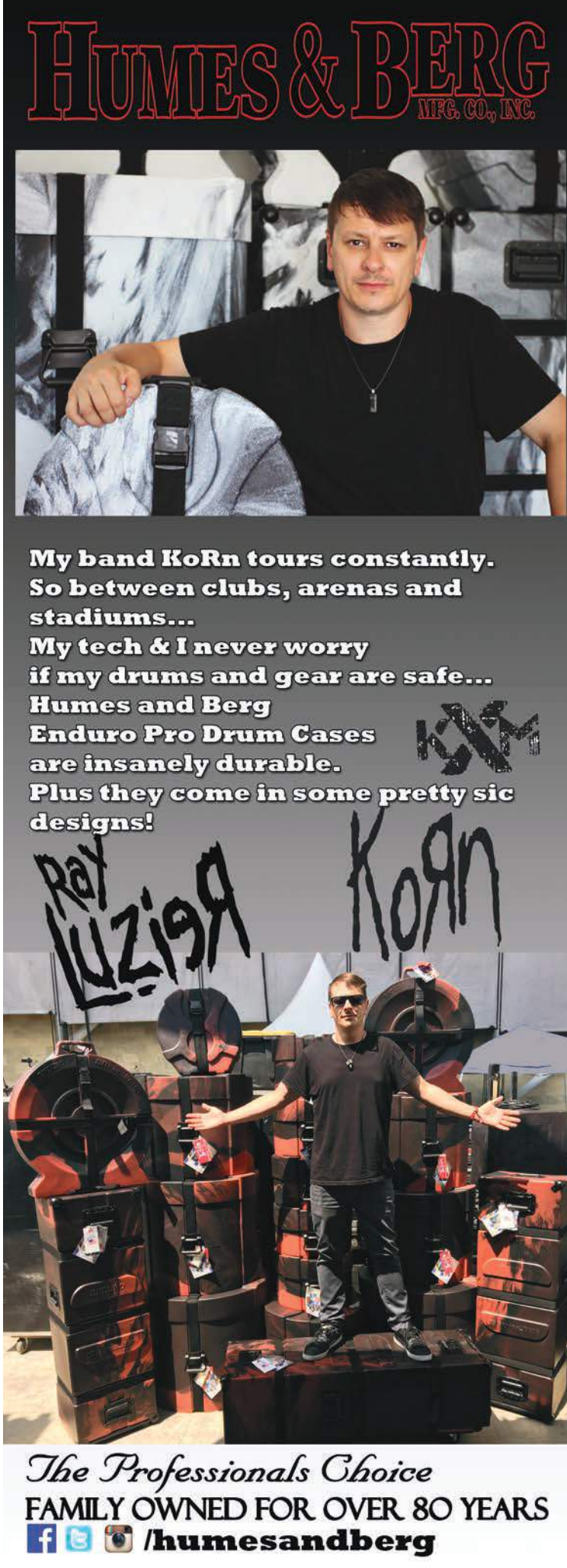
Stella: …when I decided? I knew when I was really young, probably around ten or eleven, though I was playing guitar and bass then. When I was thirteen I started playing drums, and that desire just got more intense. And when I was nineteen years old, I was two years into a college degree in Sydney—not in music, but psychology. I was going to be a social worker, basically. But two years in I thought, *Now is the time to take a year off and dedicate myself to music.* Because I was playing in, like, seven bands in Sydney and also trying to get this degree, and I felt like I had a foot inside all these doors but I wasn't committing to enter any of them. So I told my parents, who were very adamant about me getting an education.

MD: They wanted you to get your degree.

Stella: Right, to have for security, and then I could do whatever I want. And I was like, "Hmm…give me a year to figure it out." A month and a half later I was asked to move to New York, after the term had finished. It was one of those freak things. But I do believe that if you really want something, you can get it. I mean, I was very fortunate being raised in an English-speaking country with the possibility for something like that happening, where a band could translate to an audience in America or Europe.

MD: Having parents who were musicians must have helped too, even though they wanted you to get your degree.

Stella: Totally. I mean, they made the whole thing happen initially by just putting the idea in my head that it was possible to have this kind of job. If they were both accountants and maybe played guitar in their early twenties but then stopped taking it seriously…



Stella Mozgawa

But they emigrated to Australia very much wanting to play music professionally, which they did until I started high school. The first twelve years of my life was them gigging. But it was hard—playing in restaurants and stuff.

MD: What kind of music was it?

Stella: They were playing in cover bands. That's how they made their bread in Australia. But my mom was a pop star in Poland, and my dad was a session jazz bass player.

MD: Wow.

Stella. Yeah! Very cool.

MD: Do you have records with your parents on them?

Stella: Yes. So, my mom was in this quite popular group in the '70s. Do you know the amazing British electronic music producer Four Tet? He actually found one of my mom's records, and he bought two copies, one for himself and one for me to give to my mom. And it's got a sick drum break on it! [laughs]

MD: So when did your folks stop worrying that you were going to make a career out of this?

Stella: They undoubtedly still worry. But I think I'm in a space now where…to go back to your initial question, I wanted to be a famous drummer—that was very much the goal. Now I'm happy to be in a studio making music, composing music, playing on people's records, still being in Warpaint for however long it's still relevant to everyone…. I know now I want to make music forever. But it's not necessarily about being famous.

Go Where You Wanna Go, Do Anything You Wanna Do

MD: You've worked with quite a number of artists outside Warpaint. Has that always

been a goal?

Stella: Well, I always did it. Before I was in Warpaint I was doing a lot of different projects. I was touring but also doing a lot of recording, saying yes to a lot of things and enjoying the variety of experience. What was great about being in a band was being able to focus a bit. I can still do those things when I want to but be really selective about it, which to me is the perfect situation. I really only make records and collaborate with people who I think are special.

When I'd just moved to L.A. I was so stressed out about it: *This might be the last phone call I get from someone who's interested in me playing drums with them!* That constant anxiety of being forgotten or not thought of as very interesting or good enough. Being in a band takes away a lot of that anxiety, because it makes it completely about you. If you make a good record and you play with passion and fire, you'll be fine.

MD: And you're working.

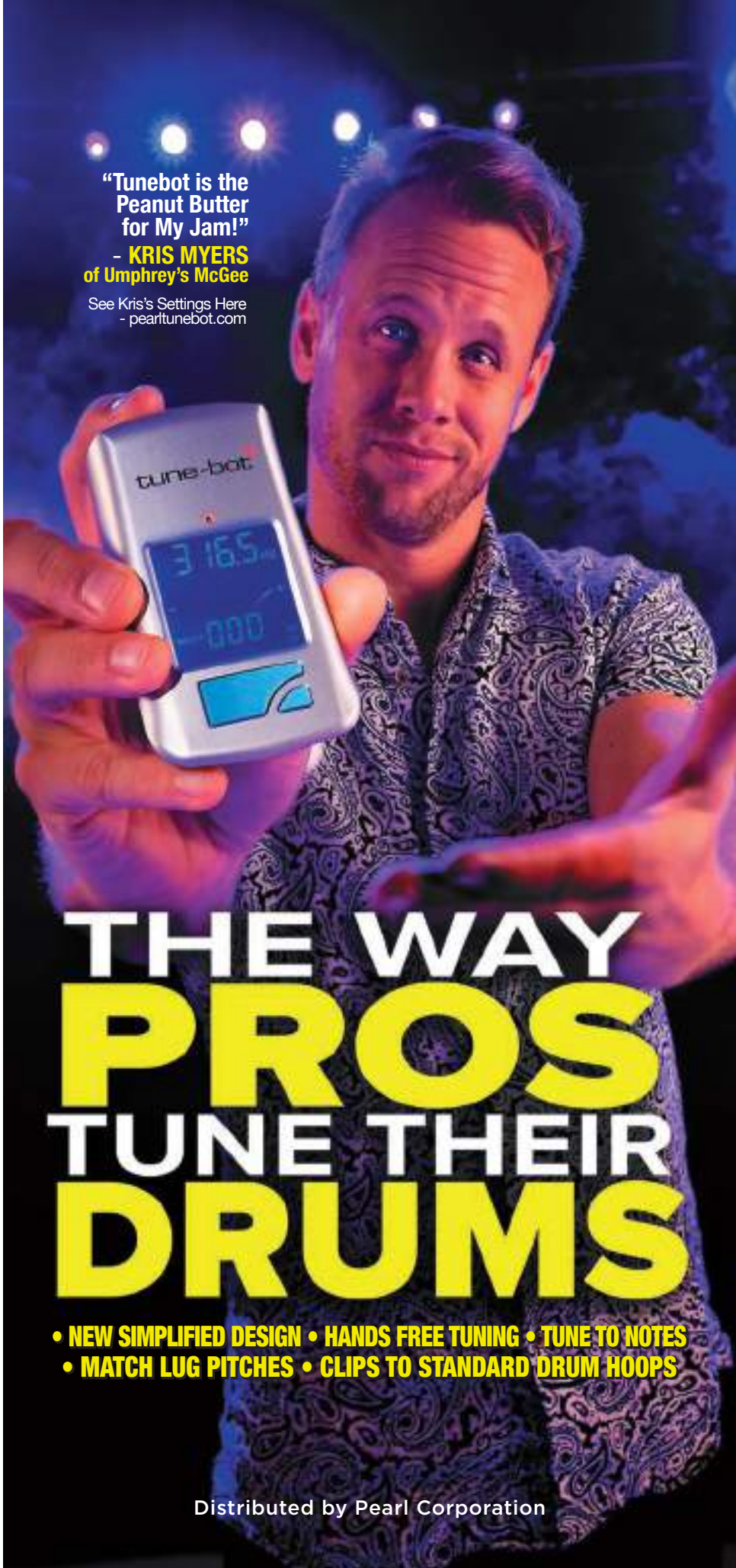
Stella: Exactly. You'll go on tour…so it puts a really lovely blueprint on everything that you can attach yourself to and have a work ethic about. As opposed to, [desperately] *Who am I going to be for this next band?* or *How do I have to dress?* or whatever. You can do what you want, because it's your thing now.

MD: Was there ever a time when someone said something to you about your prospects as a drummer that was either particularly encouraging or daunting?

Stella: I don't know about daunting so much, but I remember there being a fear of losing integrity when I moved to America and wasn't playing in a band that was completely the way that I wanted to express myself. There was a punk part of my brain that was like, *No! Don't do it!* But ultimately I knew where I wanted to go. And I knew I was going to get there somehow. I knew that I wanted to play music every day, and you've got to play music every day to play

Recordings

Warpaint Heads Up, The Fool, Warpaint /// **Flea** Helen Burns /// **Tom Jones** Spirit in the Room /// **Swahili Blonde** Man Meat /// **Kurt Vile** Wakin on a Pretty Daze, Spotify Sessions /// **Soko** I Thought I Was an Alien /// **Adam Green** Aladdin /// **Cate Le Bon** Crab Day /// **Jagwar Ma** Every Now & Then /// **Andy Clockwise** The Socialite /// **Tim Presley** The Wink /// **jennylee** Right On! /// **SBTRKT** Wonder Where We Land /// **Kim Gordon** "Murdered Out" /// **Regina Spektor** Remember Us to Life /// **Ed Harcourt** Furnaces



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music every day [laughs], not just sit around and formulate this cunning plan to trick some famous band into asking you to play with them, and then make a ton of money and be a star drummer or something. You've just got to be out there and be industrious.

On the positive tip, there's something that I think about every time a situation comes up with either the band or options that I might have or projects that I might commit a certain amount of time and energy to. The reason I moved to L.A. was to make a record with Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, which was in turn how I met the girls in Warpaint. I was living in his house while we were making this record, and I was stressing about whether to do a tour with someone, worrying that I would lose session work. I was like, "I really don't like the music that much, but I need to pay the rent," and he said, "Never go for the fast nickel; always go for the long dime. You'll be fine."

And that makes sense—invest in something that's integral and important. I mean, you can do the fast-nickel thing if you want to get the experience of playing in a reggae band for a night. Or you might do a fun gig with your friends that's musically not anything you would have imagined doing but that might enable you to buy a really cool drum machine. But ultimately you should make your decisions in terms of the long-term satisfaction of making something that's beautiful, as opposed to just stoking the ego fire every time and making money. You can't live like that. After a while it's just exhausting.

What Becomes a Drummer Most?

MD: Do you feel that there's a specific set of skills that all drummers today should keep up?

Tools of the Trade

On *Heads Up* and on the album's supporting tour, Mozgawa plays a 1964 Slingerland kit in jazz sizes (12/14/20). "Live I generally play C&C drums," Stella says. "Those guys are amazing and they made a kit for me for our last tour, which is more of a rock kit. But since we recorded with smaller, more electronic/samply funk sounds, the Slingerland seemed like the right one to go on the road with. On the last record and on a lot of the studio stuff I've done, I used an early-'70s Pearl wood/fiberglass set, the one James Gadson loves. That's one of the best-sounding kits ever."

On stage Mozgawa has triggers on her snare and bass drum. "On a lot of the tracks on the album," she explains, "we made the snare and kick sounds a little grittier and more electronic, so I'll just fatten up the snare on certain songs live, like 'New Song' from *Heads Up* and 'Disco/Very' from the last record, just put a LinnDrum snare on it. I use an Acrolite snare, which is exactly the snare I want to use forever until the end of time, but they never really made a deep model. So I guess I'm compensating a little for that, but also the familiarity of that tone. Also, even though there's four of us on stage, we're sort of a three-piece, and we've got to kind of fill in sonically—a little more decay on certain things."

Mozgawa uses a Roland SPD-SX, both to play beats on and to store samples. "We don't run tracks," she says, "but I'll use a click for about four songs in the set, all new songs, where I'm triggering electronic samples or phrases. When I'm triggering them I have to be in time."

Live, Mozgawa has been using the Istanbul Agop 24" Signature series ride and 15" Signature series hi-hats shown here; she'll also use two 16" Agop series crashes for hi-hats, as well as a 24" Agop Signature ride and a 24" Turk ride. For the recording of *Heads Up*, she used a two-ride setup, with the second one in the standard crash position.

Mozgawa uses Promark Shira Kashi Oak PW5AW sticks and Remo and Aquarian heads.

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Stella Mozgawa

Stella: I think it depends on the job description of whatever project you're doing. It's always such an interesting blend of how creative and impulsive the person wants you to be. More and more I find myself in situations where someone gets me into a studio and says, "I'll play you the track, and you play over it. Do what you feel." And I like that just as much as I enjoy hearing, "I programed a beat on a 606; make it sound the same, but play it live."

All the skills I've learned since I started playing professionally have been very much influenced by the work I've been asked to do. And I think that's what's so exciting about it. It's not like I even know if I'm getting "better" as a drummer; I just know I'm having wider, richer experiences playing music. Sometimes I feel like I'm being hired to be a technician, and that's really fun. But sometimes it's about using another part of my brain altogether, like, "Rearrange this song," or "Where do *you* hear the chorus?"

The levels of involvement and collaboration are so different now, even from when I started. I think if my dad hadn't listened to Steely Dan, and if I didn't listen to and try to emulate the drummers in Tool or Primus when I was growing up, I wouldn't have half the skills I have now. I didn't have formal drum education for an extended time—it was just a year or so—so that's kind of how I learned to play. And a lot of those guys were very impressive, athletic, and musical—the definition of what a drummer was at that point. Whereas now, and I apologize if this sounds pretentious, but I hope to be hired as a "musician" rather than as a "drummer." I like being involved with all the other stuff, and that's why it's great being in a band.

People are making music in such crazy ways now! It's not just everyone in the studio together and tracking everything live, or playing the drum part and then overdubbing the bass. It might be, "We made this demo on Ableton, and it got remixed by this other person, and now you're going to add this little part to it." And other times it's, "We've got absolutely nothing. You're going to start playing, and we're going to build a song over it." So I think it's interesting that there's less of a definition of what a drummer is. It's a brave new world.

I think it's all about how rich you want your experience to be and how versatile you want to be. And it can be scary. I have no idea what kind of drummer I am. I have tricks that I do when I feel like I have to do a certain job or add a certain element to a song. But it's such an open field, and it's a game without rules. I mean, drumming is endlessly more interesting than it ever was back in the day—the feeling of *creating* something rather than *executing* something is really rewarding.

MD: Speaking of execution, sometimes just a slight variation of where the bass drum falls in a bar can change the mood of a piece. Is this the sort of thing that you focus on in your playing?

Stella: When I was younger I'd spend time working on the gap between double hits on a kick drum or something. Or what if I pulled the second note on the snare slightly? I love drummers like Steve Jordan, who are right on, but when they stretch time a little bit, you're like, *Whoa, this is weird.* People like J Dilla were really aware of that kind of thing. And maybe being an enthusiast and listening to that kind of stuff, I like to explore how that swing can make someone feel a little uneasy or dance in a certain way.

I just know the kinds of beats that I like, and I guess I try and use a little bit of that spirit in the music I make. Sometimes on a session you have to be very much on, but often it's more about your character. If someone says, "Play an MPC [drum machine] swing," you'll play it differently from the way I play it. And if there's a preference for your personality, then you're going to be the one to do it. I'm interested in expressing my idea of comfort or discomfort, or rigidity or fluidity, in a certain moment. What do I want to hear in this song? Maybe I want to play a really loose hi-hat but a tight snare and bass.

Going back to how music is changing, a lot of people who are writing the beats that you're hearing on the radio and at festivals are not drummers. But they're involved in that world because they're able to express their personalities through composing on a sequencer or computer, and that's what it's about.

Drumming is becoming like singing, where it was very much a technical vocation and a job that had limited parameters, and now anyone can make those decisions. Not that I want to be the sloppiest drummer alive—I very much care about doing a job right and giving someone what they want and not having very much of an ego—but ultimately it's about expressing your personality. And if you get to engage in a world that maybe not many drummers are engaging in, like the electronic composition world, then you have an advantage of having spent ten or twenty years behind a drumset. You know what a snare sounds like when you hit it in the middle or when you crack the rim. That stuff is very important, so why not involve yourself in that world of people that are taking drumming into their own hands?

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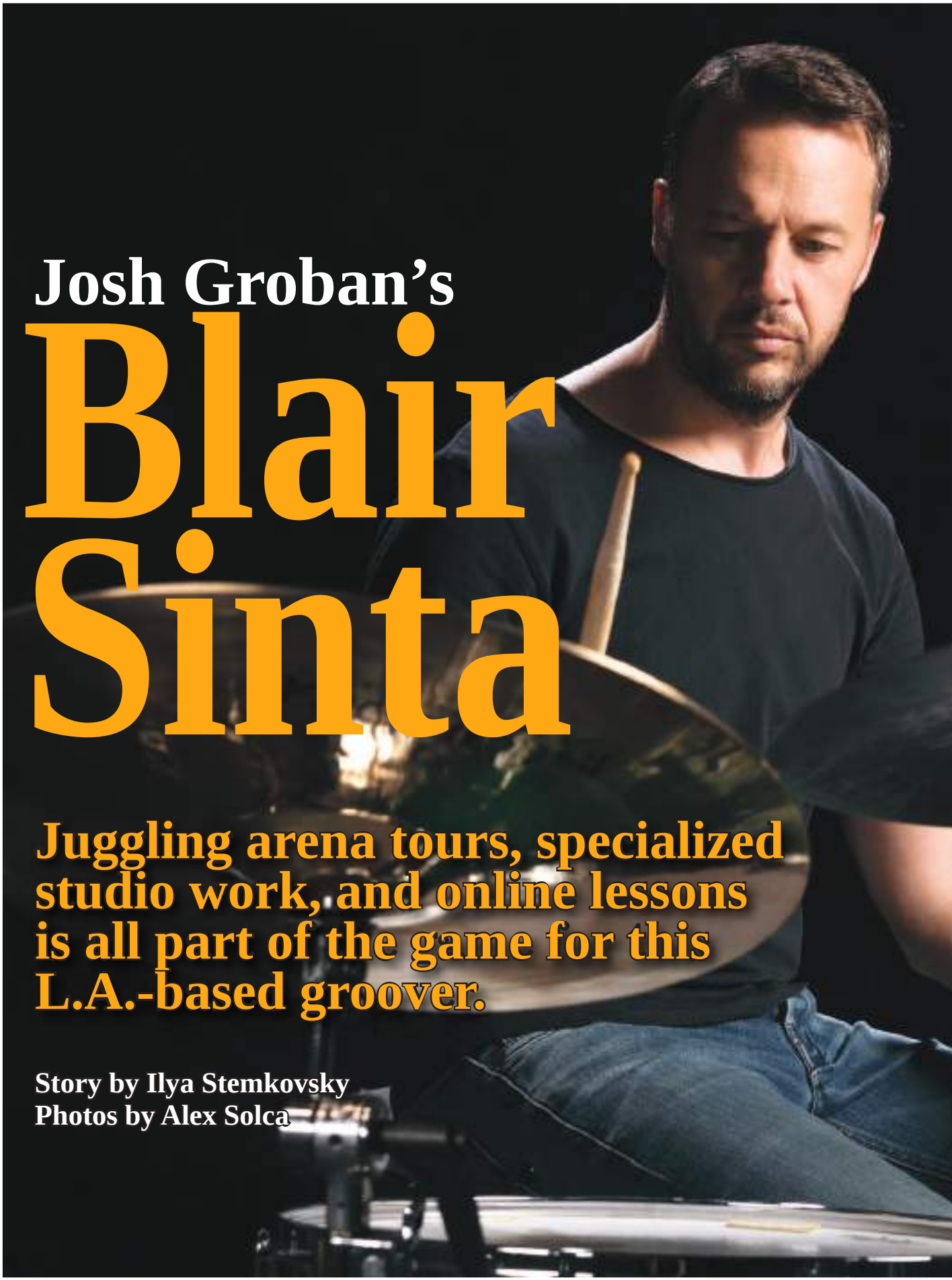

Josh Groban's Blair Sinta

Juggling arena tours, specialized studio work, and online lessons is all part of the game for this L.A.-based groover.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Alex Solca

Blair Sinta spent his formative teenage years playing gigs in Detroit, and if you're looking to prove that the famous Midwestern work ethic applies as easily to drummers as it does to auto workers, he's a great example. After graduating from the prestigious University of North Texas, Sinta headed west to Los Angeles, where he played rock and jazz gigs around town until finally landing the drum chair with Alanis Morissette in 2001. Since then he's kept busy playing with an impressive array of pop and rock icons, including Annie Lennox, Stevie Nicks, Chris Cornell, Glen Ballard, Melissa Etheridge, Idina Menzel, and his most recent employer, vocal powerhouse Josh Groban.

Sinta has expanded into the world of creating custom drum tracks, and he's jumped headlong into the crowded YouTube video-lesson pool. Identifying no shortage of gospel chops content online, Sinta instead decided to focus on dispensing practical knowledge for the recording studio and the road. Check out his Sinta's Sounds videos for tips on getting varying bass drum tones, examples of applying two radically different drum approaches to the same music, and more.

"When I give lessons, for the guys that seek me out, a lot of it turns around toward these things," Sinta says. "It's stuff that became super-important to my career, so I felt like sharing those things. Getting different snare sounds wasn't something I thought about until I started working in studios. It was always, 'Tune it up until it sounds good, and hit the drum with a rimshot.'"

MD caught up with Sinta while he was finishing up a tour with Groban to dig deeper into these topics and others.

MD: Let's talk about school. Is North Texas or Berklee worth it today when so much education can be found elsewhere?
Blair: It seems to me that all that knowledge is available online, as far as technique and learning your rudiments and metric modulation. The invaluable thing about being at a place like Berklee or North Texas or Miami is the musical community there—just being in those scenes and having those guys become your peers, and actually playing music. You can sit in your basement all day and learn YouTube licks, but you're missing out on making music with other human beings that are there to gain knowledge on playing music, and not just being a drummer that has incredible chops.
MD: What about the fact that you'd be missing out on the competitive vibe that comes from being around other hungry drummers?
Blair: A lot of it is personal motivation, but being in that environment, hearing Keith Carlock or Ari Hoenig in their practice room, is highly motivational. Plus at those schools you [gain] melodic and harmonic knowledge, study mallets, and learn about music and not just drums.
MD: With regard to being an educator, your Sinta's Sounds YouTube videos are very informative, but aren't you giving away secrets that make you hirable?
Blair: That's the gray area of YouTube and trying to have some kind of presence. But about giving out information—can I make money off doing that? Yes. Can I hold those cards tight and not tell anybody? I can do that too. But we're drummers. It's valuable information. I wish I'd known some of that stuff earlier. I was fortunate early in my career to have chances in the studio to discover the stuff from friends and engineers. That's the million-dollar question in this day and age. What do you make people pay for, and what should be public knowledge? I would never make a video on a bunch of licks that I do, because I'm not that kind of drummer. The whole YouTube thing is such a game, and we're all trying to figure it out.
MD: In one of your YouTube snare videos, you say engineers prefer when the snare is hit in the center, instead of rimshots. If most of us don't get to play on beautiful stages, with a front-of-house person playing a big role in our sound, is it practical to play the center and not cut through with a rimshot?
Blair: That was interesting, because there were a lot of people who didn't agree with me, which was fine. There are different styles of music and different situations that do require it. In fact, on this Josh Groban gig, right before the first gig, the front-of-house engineer came up to me and was looking for a bit more definition from the snare. So I figured I would tune the drum higher and I would hit a rimshot, because he was looking

for a clarity that wasn't happening from hitting the center of the drum. So when I express my opinion about things like that, I try to do it in a fashion that's open. There's no right way to do it. People have different styles and tastes. What I was trying to get across in that video was that maybe due to the style of music that I play, and that I'm not a metal drummer, for me [not playing rimshots] sounded better in the situations I'm in, the way the drum speaks under a microphone.

MD: What about when the guitar player keeps turning up? Rimshots just cut in those situations.

Blair: I've been there a thousand times, when you can't even hear yourself. So I totally understand. But there are also some great modern rock drummers who don't play rimshots, from what I observe.

MD: So how do you stand out on YouTube? There are so many people putting up videos now.

Blair: I'm just trying to find my niche. It's about going with what your strong points are. There's a term I've recently learned, "finding your tribe." And there are other people out there who are interested in the kind of work that I do. And hopefully it can turn into a more monetary type of venture.

MD: Putting cymbals on snares and other acoustic tricks aren't new, but they seem to be essential to sounding electronic or programmed. Do people request that for recordings and the live stage, or do you just do it as a surprise?

Blair: All of the above. [laughs] When I hear programmed things, I think that this is the way the songwriter or the artist wants this to sound, and that's why it was recorded that way. But instead of bringing all this extra gear like a Roland pad and a sampler for this one handclap in the tune, what can I do to emulate that sound?

I'll think, *What is that sound, and how can I make that happen in an acoustic way that sounds convincing?* So I'll experiment with turning the snare upside down or using a different mallet or stick or brush. I'm staying true to the recording, but I also don't have to bring a bunch of electronics, because that's another whole trip to the car and time to set up. To me it's a challenge, and I think it's cool. And frankly I'll get bored on a four-piece kit after a while.

After Melissa Etheridge hired me, I brought a handful of extra sounds and snares to the first rehearsal, so I could cover her twenty-five-year recording span. I had no idea how she would react when I'd go to emulate some of these things. And I vividly remember her turning around and going, "Whoa, what was that? That was cool." So that was a big plus in that scenario. And maybe it helped her with the approach to the song or the monotony of having to play that song again.

MD: In the past year you've played with Melissa, Chris Cornell, Josh Homme, Josh

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E. 14x20 DW Classics bass drum

Cymbals: Istanbul Agop
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2. 15" OM hi-hats
3. 20" OM crash
4. 22" OM ride
5. 16" Xist Ion hi-hats (upside down)

Hardware: DW, including 5000 series bass drum pedal, 8000 series hi-hat stand, and 6000 series Ultra Light cymbal stands

Heads: Remo, including CS black-dot snare batter, Coated Ambassador tom batters, Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter, and Clear Ambassador concert tom batter

Sticks: Regal Tip 9A sticks, Sutter model brushes, and hard felt cymbal mallets

Percussion: Gon Bops

Groban, and Idina Menzel. That's an eclectic roster of artists. Is there anything special that you do to prepare for the versatility needed?

Blair: That goes back to your first question about being at North Texas. I didn't set out to be a jazz drummer. But at North Texas it was sink or swim. I'd done one or two big band gigs since getting out of school. So when it came to Idina's music, which had big band sections in it, I was prepared. And it was amazing to me that I was able to walk into that situation and understand how to set up horns.

MD: The Cornell and Homme gigs are pretty rocking, though.

Blair: I've always been a rock-band guy. That was always the goal, but the bands unfortunately didn't go anywhere. I'm a huge Soundgarden fan, and stylistically it's not really a stretch, because I love that stuff so much. I played with Cornell once this year and once about five years ago. But I was a grunge kid in the early '90s. I listened to that as much as jazz.

MD: Talk about some of the gear you're using with these artists. Do you work with a musical director to come up with kits and cymbals, or can you kind of guess on your own at this point?

Blair: There's no real outside influence. With Groban, it's much more of a rock gig than people would expect. Bigger toms, bigger sounds, a pretty fat snare. I'm actually hitting relatively hard. But it all comes from listening to recordings and experimenting with what I think is going to work. Last summer with Idina, I took out 12" and 16" toms, a 20" bass drum, and a 5" snare. The music was much lighter and there was a swing element to it, and bigger drums were going to be too weighty for the music, and possibly overpowering dynamically too.

MD: The Groban show is not to a click, right?

Blair: About 90 percent of it is.

MD: So what about ritards at the ends of phrases?

Blair: The click on this gig is nuts. It's all over the place. In fact, in rehearsals I had to go check a few times to make sure I wasn't sucking. *Is it me, or is this thing moving?* [laughs] And I think the reason it's like that, and I hope I'm right about this, is that when Josh records, they don't use a click, and then they click to it later. So with the live string section and him it feels natural.

MD: Exactly how much cymbal swelling are you doing nightly?

Blair: I've done more cymbal swelling on this tour than I've ever done in my life. [laughs] Learning the art of the cymbal swell has been an interesting experience for me.

MD: Are you starting on the edge or in the middle of the cymbal?

Blair: It's about how quick the swell needs to come, and dynamics. I've discovered in certain tunes, sometimes going into a chorus, you're really starting to lay into the cymbal and have it almost sound brighter when you come to the end of the roll into the chorus, which is more exciting. And other times I'll do a mezzo-forte longer roll and not lay into it as much and have the cymbal have a darker tone.

MD: You're using mallets? And you're swelling mostly crashes?

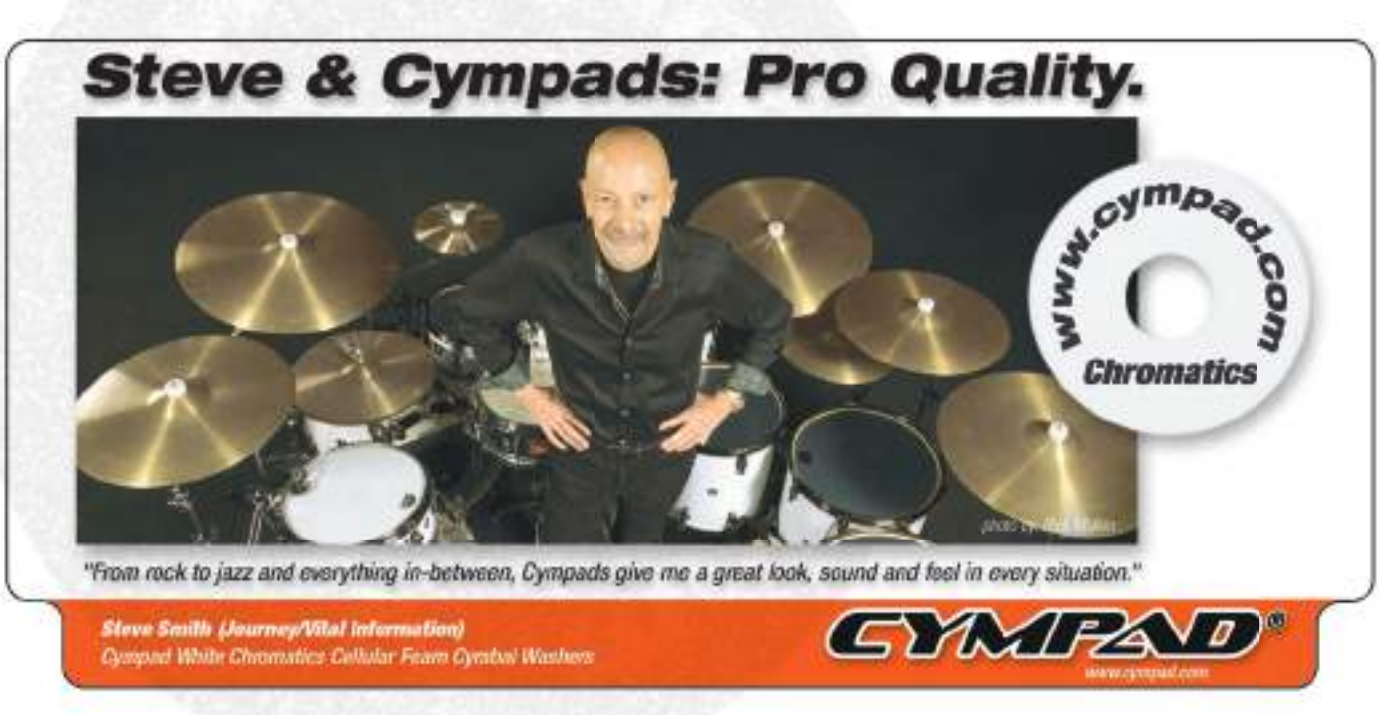
Blair: Yeah, the same timpani mallets the whole time, and the cymbals are bigger—20" crashes, a 21" sizzle, and a 24" ride. Ironically, the 24" ride is quieter than the crashes, because it's darker.

MD: Do you have musical interests outside of the drums?

Blair: I've always written music, but not necessarily for public consumption. But lately I've started writing for music libraries or commercials. I scored a friend's movie a couple of years ago, and I found that really fascinating.

As a guy who's not going to put out chops videos, some of what I do to draw work into my home studio is try to display drum sounds, so people think, *This guy can get any type of sound for the artist.* Much of the time the inspiration is coming from a drum sound or a combination of kicks, snares, cymbals, etc. So instead of putting up just some drum groove, what if I write some music and put it in context? And through that, I've had a music licensing company reach out to me and ask if something was available. I was hoping it would work its way out there, and it actually did.

Part of it is another income source, and the other part is trying to fulfill a creative side. But I'm also focusing more on becoming an educator. My focus is not necessarily on technique but on the conceptual side, creating style, and what that means, through YouTube or in-studio lessons. So it's geared much more toward becoming a working, functional musician than a chops drummer, and also being an educator through doing as opposed to a "classroom" teacher.



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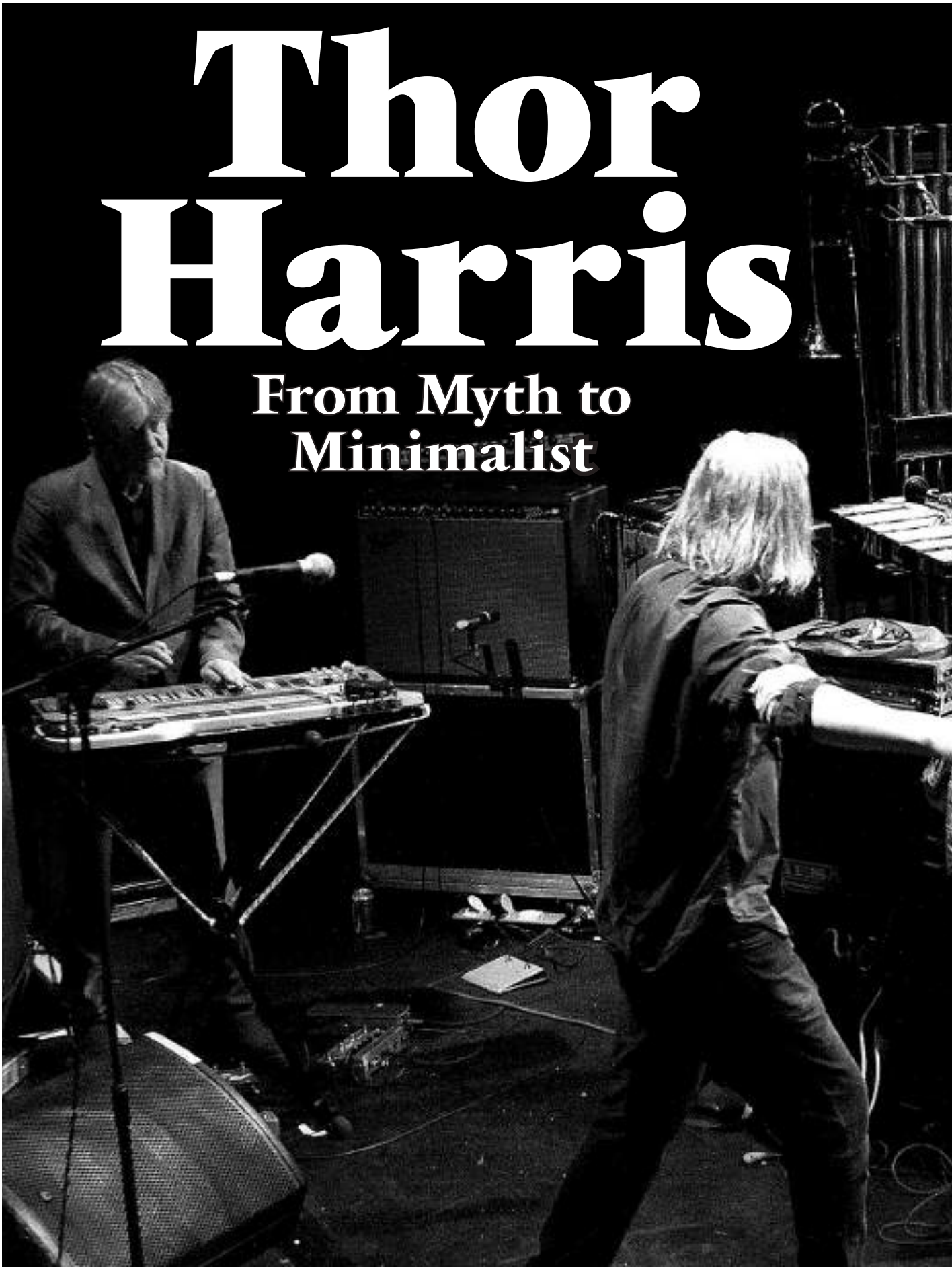
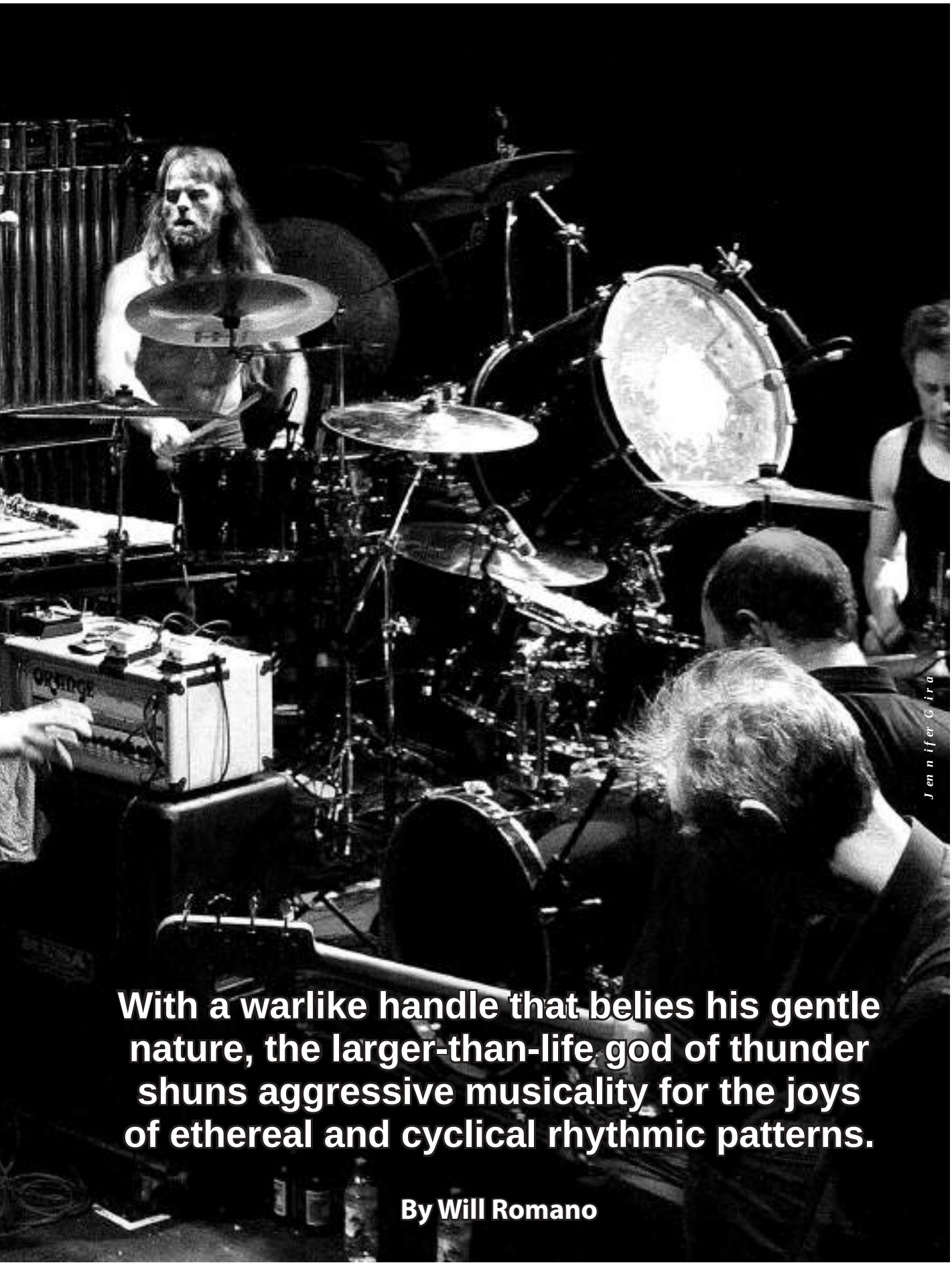




Jennifer Girard

With a warlike handle that belies his gentle nature, the larger-than-life god of thunder shuns aggressive musicality for the joys of ethereal and cyclical rhythmic patterns.

By Will Romano

The last person you'd expect to come to mind when thinking of the A-list Hollywood actor Jeff Bridges is the Austin-based drummer/percussionist Thor Harris. With all due respect to the celebrated *Big Lebowski* star, that's just the way Harris prefers it.

At the New York City premiere of Harris's latest musical vehicle, Thor & Friends, the percussionist exhibited a knack for bringing people together by breaking down the imaginary fourth wall separating audience and performer. While conversing with the largely seated crowd at Le Poisson Rouge in Greenwich Village, in downtown Manhattan, Harris beseeched concert attendances to compile an impromptu list of thespians turned musicians (and vice versa).

Someone shouts out, "Jeff Bridges," jarring Harris's memory and inspiring him to regale us with a fascinating tale of chance. As it happens, Thor once shared an elevator ride with the erstwhile "Dude," who chatted up the drummer in search of a backing band. Apparently Harris had little interest in country- and blues-rock, and the interaction between the amiable indie artist and the Academy Award–winning celebrity abruptly ceased.

Had Harris been receptive, who knows? Maybe he'd grow accustomed to boarding private jets with trendsetters and sipping champagne poolside at posh five-star hotels. (Maybe he'd gravitate toward acting himself, and be name-checked in nightclubs?) None of this happened, of course, and you're not likely to hear Harris complaining. Quite the contrary. He appears content exploring a variety of styles at every musical left turn he makes, crisscrossing the country in a van with his merry band of accomplished players—a surrogate family of sorts—and opening for artists such as Fat Possum Records signee Adam Torres and Amanda Palmer of the Dresden Dolls. "Thor is one of those universal human switchboard connectors," Palmer tells *MD*. "Colliding people from different scenes is one of his specialties."

To know Harris is to love him. Astonishingly, even walking the streets of an outer borough of New York City, the La Porte, Texas, native greets someone with whom he's acquainted. It's been said he's won gigs based on his "sensibility" as much as his drumming skills, which are considerable. In fact, Thor might represent the dawning of a new kind of archetype: the jovial, sage-like outsider, what with that flowing shoulder-length hair, a public acknowledgment of his struggles with depression, and the unforgettable nickname he earned when a former place of employment enjoyed a surplus of employees with his given name, Michael. The powerfully built drummer wears the reference to the popular hammer-wielding Norse deity as a badge of honor, like a conquering hero emerging victorious from battles both outward and inward.

As a percussionist Harris rose to prominence via his collaborations with a large cross-section of artists, ranging from freak-folkie Devendra Banhart and art-pop act Shearwater to baritone Texas-based folk-rocker Bill Callahan, Norwegian electro-poppist Jenny Hval, and, most notably, post-rock/prog-rock/no-wave scene veterans Swans, whose marathon live shows produce ritualistic fever dreams for the faithful while providing mentally and physically draining workouts for the band members.

Although heralded as "experimental," Swans' music seems to be much more cohesive, if not more psychologically damaging, than often credited. Prolific, propulsive, and emotionally stirring records, including 2012's *The Seer*, 2014's *To Be Kind*, and 2016's *The Glowing Man*, challenge listeners with their hypnotic, cinematic, and often violent soundscapes.

"Playing rudiments really does feel like meditation. Meditation does something to the way our brains work."

Swans, founded in the early '80s by singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist Michael Gira, went into hibernation in the late '90s. During the band's dormancy, Gira formed the slightly folkie Angels of Light, for which he enlisted Harris as percussionist. In 2010, with Harris in tow, Gira resurrected Swans. Prior to Gira's recent public statement regarding the group cutting down on touring, Harris flew the coop and now devotes much of his time to Thor & Friends, which released an eponymous debut this past fall. The bright, melodic, and minimalistic album features Harris on percussion and wind instruments; marimba player Peggy Ghorbani; multi-instrumentalist Sarah "Goat" Gautier; Deerhoof's John Dieterich, who engineered the record and played prepared guitar and bass; Neutral Milk Hotel's Jeremy Barnes on accordion, mellotron, and drums; violinist/marimba player/vocalist Heather Trost; and Raven on electronics and bone flute.

MD was set to speak with Harris at Le Poisson Rouge, but soundcheck delays preempted our talk. We did eventually connect later that same week in Brooklyn, however. Over a burger dish and a bowl of granola we discussed Thor's new career direction and the meditative qualities of repetitive rhythms.

A Circle of Friends

MD: The last time we spoke, you said you were listening to Steve Reich and Terry Riley. What is it about the cyclical, repetitive nature of the material composed by the minimalists that inspires you?

Thor: I think it comes down to this: Like Steve Reich, the music that Thor & Friends makes is really a bunch of simple parts layered onto one another. There are a number of parts that are not particularly important, which is sort of like ancient choral music, which I love.

MD: On stage it appeared as though you were conducting the Thor & Friends "orchestra." How much input did the other musicians have on the band's debut?

Thor: A lot of people offered input, especially Sarah "Goat" Gautier. My living room [in Austin] is set up similarly to the stage you saw at Le Poisson Rouge, with marimba, vibraphone, and xylophone. A lot of the time we'll hang out in my house and we'll play a simple melody on the marimba, and Sarah will play piano or marimba alongside me. The way melodies interlock, sometimes in different time signatures, makes it interesting.

MD: At one point in the show there were five musicians playing a single electric vibraphone.

Thor: Like piano, marimba, vibraphone, and xylophone are instruments that anybody can walk up to and make music with.

MD: On stage you were using two mallets in each hand. How did this technique evolve?

Thor: I learned to do that from watching videos of Lionel Hampton. Actually, to get into Angels of Light I lied to Michael Gira about my level of proficiency on the vibraphone. I did a bunch of woodshedding just to get onto the *New Mother* record [1999]. I didn't even have a vibraphone then. I bought one for the tour. If there is one thing I can say to young musicians it's that it's great to become a master drummer, but we all know a master drummer who's playing in his mom's basement to no one.

MD: You opened for Amanda Palmer and backed her on drums during her headlining set. You also recorded new music with her prior to the final performances in New York. How did that go?

Thor: Amanda played piano and spoke a poem she wrote over a twenty-three-minute version of a Thor & Friends song called "Jordan's Song." Amanda likes things a bit more arranged and composed. I'm more from the school of the minimalists, in which a piece of music can hang for a long time on one concept or idea and change ever so slightly. That reminds me of a band from Australia, the Necks, that I like. It's like a slow-morphing study, usually on one or two ideas. One thing their music does is change the way your brain processes time.

MD: That could describe the impact Swans has on listeners.

Thor: Yes. I think [a Swans show] changes the way your brain processes time too. That's a visionary thing about Michael Gira. When we worked up the set in 2010, I thought audiences would be repulsed and leaving in the middle of our set. Couldn't have been further from the truth. That live show was so violent and so long that, for me, it was like a boxing match for two and a half or three hours. By the end of that set I was just euphorically exhausted. I quickly learned that I couldn't go to the hotel gym that night. I could just do that gig. I had to do a lot of weird things to survive that show. I had to play with pieces of PEX [cross-linked polyethylene plastic used for plumbing], because I was breaking so many cymbals.

MD: What inspired the Thor & Friends composition "Crusades"?

Thor: I love early music—European classical music in the Renaissance and Medieval period, before it all started to sound so uptight and became all about virtuoso [playing]. "Crusades" was mostly written by Goat. To me it sounds like early music.

MD: Is "Whose Fingers" an example of the band congregating around the electric vibraphone and recording with it? I'm curious how this track was constructed and recorded.

Thor: Most Thor & Friends pieces are layers of simple marimba parts. We have a room full of mallet instruments. Peg, Goat, and I make those pieces from improvs much in the way rock bands work.

MD: How did "12 Ate" develop?

Thor: "12 Ate" is my attempt to hide music-school dorkdom. The title is because it's in 12/8. That's such a magical time signature because it can be subdivided in so many different ways. Tons of African music is in 12/8.

Swans, Shearwater, Smog

MD: Swans uses three percussionists/drummers. How did you coordinate percussion with Phil Puleo and Bill Rieflin on *The Glowing Man*?

Thor: Phil and I became such good friends touring and recording together over the last six years. It's nice having someone else

play the beats, and just augment them and add to them where needed. Michael Gira wants everything to sound urgent and sped up. Phil is good at following that [directive], and I just tried to stay locked in with him. We did about half of the basic tracks live all together on *The Glowing Man*. The other half I just overdubbed. Fitting into an existing drum part is always an exercise in restraint.

MD: Did you know that *The Glowing Man* was going to be the final Swans album—well, the final Swans album with this configuration—before you recorded it?

Thor: We did know this was the final Swans record when we made it.

MD: How did this impact your playing for the record, if at all?

Thor: I don't think that affected how I played on it. It's important for me to be selfless in what I play. It's a way of surrendering ego for the best outcome.

MD: You weren't on Swans' supposed farewell tour.

Thor: I knew it wouldn't last forever, and I didn't want it to last forever, either. Swans is a tremendous band, but it could have been more interesting if there was more give and take. When you saw us live it looked like I chose everything I was playing. But there's a lot of control exerted over what everybody does in that band.

MD: What have you learned about running or leading bands from playing with Shearwater and Swans?

Thor: I'm trying to be a gentle and generous bandleader. I want to allow and encourage creative input.

MD: The Shearwater song "Castaways," from 2010's *The Golden Archipelago*, reminds me of Peter Gabriel's groundbreaking track "Intruder." Like Gabriel, did you intentionally avoid having cymbals on that song?

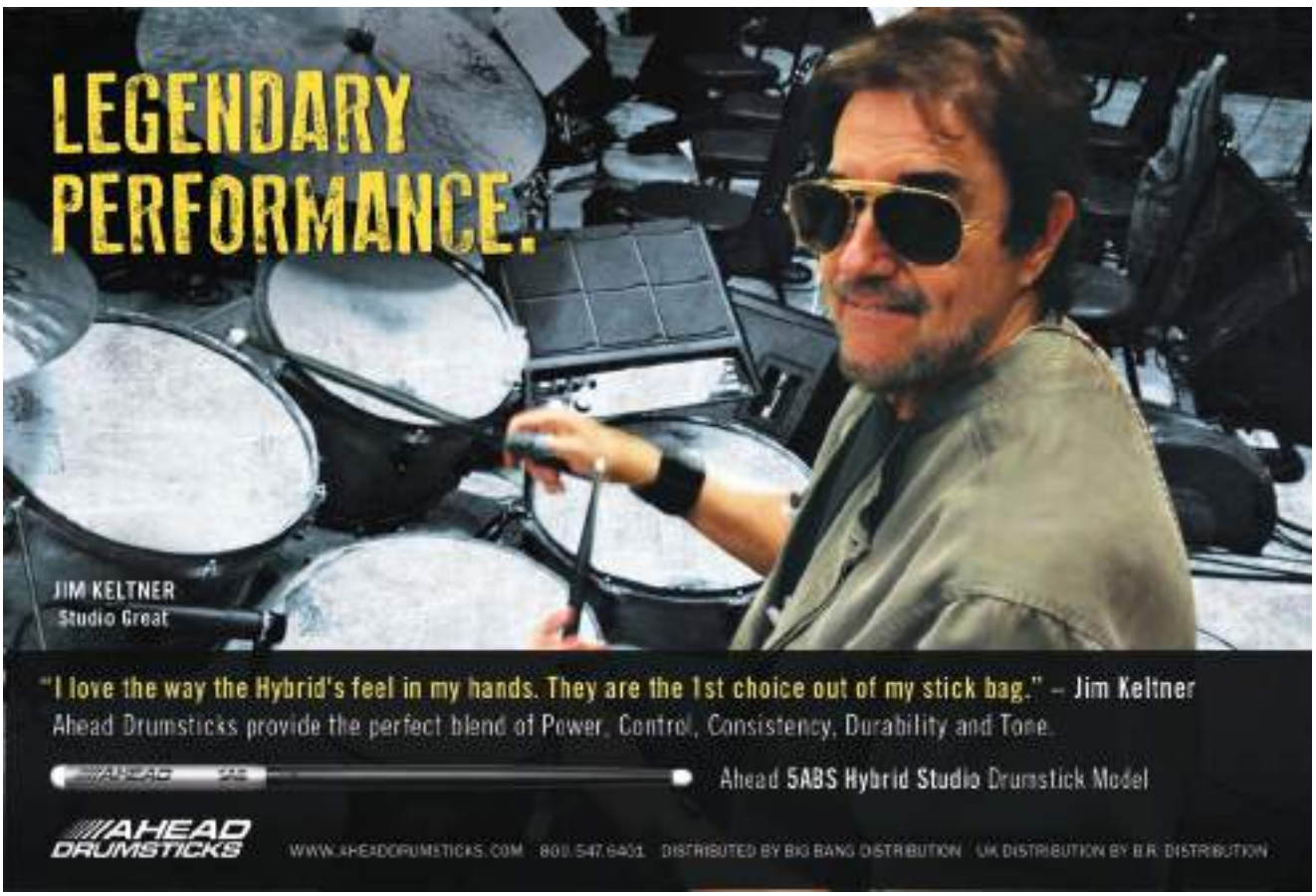
Thor: I've tried to cut back on how much I use cymbals. In Swans that was out of the question, because those huge gong and cymbal washes are what helped build those terrifying swells. In general, I try to play without a crash cymbal. It takes up so much space.

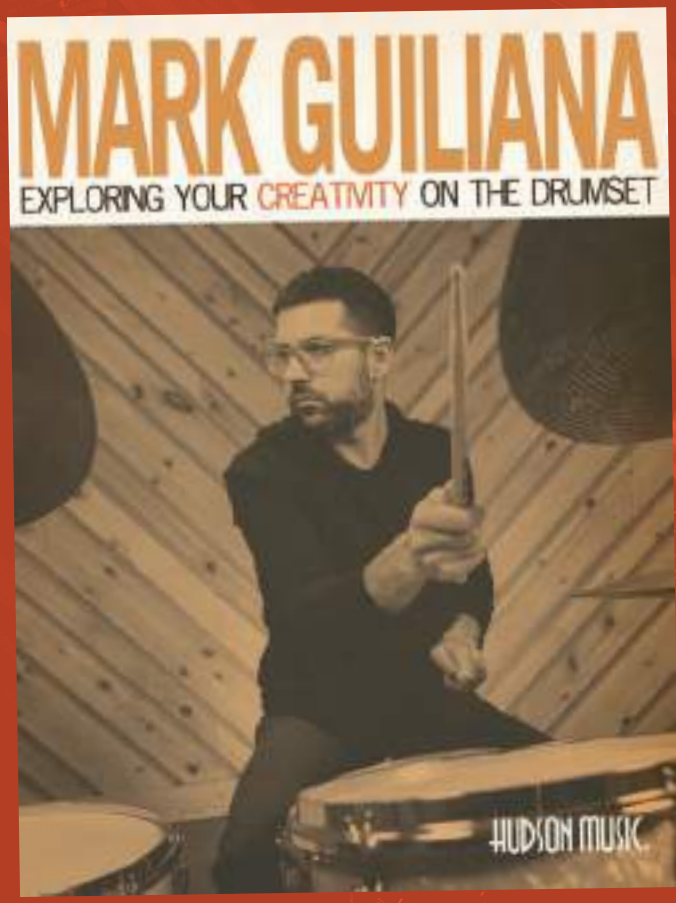
MD: What was your approach to recording with Bill Callahan for his project Smog?

Tools of the Trade

"I don't have a drumset where all the pieces match," Harris says. "If I'm playing on somebody's record, I bring as many of my strange, mismatched drums to the studio [as I can] and just build the kit according to the needs of the specific recording. My live setup when I was with Swans was tubular bells, vibraphone, two gongs, one tom, a snare drum, three cymbals, a clarinet, a trombone, a homemade viola, and a homemade hammer dulcimer. For Thor & Friends I use a 4.5-octave marimba, a Deagan 515 electric vibraphone, a Musser 3.5-octave xylophone, and a Buffet Crampon clarinet."

If Thor resembles his namesake at all, it's in his boundless energy and his Herculean accomplishments, including his background as a plumber, sculptor, woodworker, illustrator, and instrument maker. *Woodshedding* has had multiple meanings for Harris throughout his life. He constructed his own funky abode and musical instruments from scratch. He began making instruments at the tender age of thirteen and, in later years, fashioned tubular bells, violas, and a handful of electric hammer dulcimers in his home-based workshop. "With the dawn of sampling came a greater variety of sounds," Harris says. "But there's nothing like hearing someone play a strange new instrument."





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Thor Harris

Thor: I'm proud of my playing on the *A River Ain't Too Much to Love* album [2005]. I thought I could get away with not playing drumset at all, just congas. I wanted it to be this almost invisible bed of music so that Bill's voice would soar on top of it all. But after a couple of songs it was like, "I have to play drumset on this." On [Callahan's] *Dream River* [2013] I used an Osage orange clave with a wood kick drum beater on my left foot [pedal]. I was trying to eliminate metallic sounds wherever possible on that record.

Rhythm and Other Medicines

MD: When did you begin playing drums?
Thor: I started taking lessons when I was nine, learning to read rhythm. I know it's been said a million times, but playing rudiments really does feel like meditation. Meditation does something to the way our brains work. It felt good to do these real repetitive things over and over, faster and faster.
MD: You've battled depression. Do you want to speak about this?
Thor: Always.
MD: Have you found drumming is therapeutic?
Thor: It's definitely therapeutic. I don't know enough about neurology, but I think [drumming] has a detectable change on my brain chemistry. Going into a meditative state [via drumming] helps my brain to either slow down, relax, or clear itself of something. When depression hit me at age twenty-seven, even though I had it my entire life, I didn't have any idea what was happening to me. It was just a horrific nightmare. I figured I was going insane and the only thing to do was to kill myself.
MD: Was there a specific incident that convinced you to get diagnosed?
Thor: My first major band, Stick People, had just broken up, and I moved to San Francisco from Austin. I felt like Austin didn't want me anymore, which I now realize was depression talking. Within a couple of months of moving I was thinking about suicide all the time. I called my sister and explained to her what I was experiencing, and she told me to go to a shrink, who said, "Well, you probably have depression; your sister has it. It runs in families. We're going to try you on this med…." I didn't have any faith that it would work, but amazingly it did. I didn't play music with other people for a year. I was doing oil painting and thinking about how to kill myself. That's all. Then, I don't know, without even noticing, all the color started coming back into life and my sense of humor came back and I had this pure approach to making music.
MD: What's that old saying? The best way out is always through…
Thor: …sadly, I don't know if there's a way around that. I don't know if I ever would have come to the same realization without experiencing what I did.
MD: Sounds like you could have gone over the edge.
Thor: I do still visit the edge, but I don't stay there for as long anymore.
MD: How do you combat depression today?
Thor: I'm on generic Paxil; few side effects.
MD: Your dad had passed when you were young?
Thor: Yeah, when I was ten. My dad died of cancer, but he probably had a disease called hemochromatosis—too much iron in his blood. It may have something to do with why the depression got as severe as it did. When you're kid, brain chemistry is still so fresh that you're still trying to build your roots. A lot of people who end up being diagnosed with depression experienced a traumatic loss before the age of thirteen. My dad was a tremendous loving father for ten years. I have to be really thankful for that. He was a mechanical engineer and inventor, but also loved to do oil paintings.

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Thor Harris

In my household there was a machine and wood shop. Growing up in this capitalist society, I was terrified about how I was supposed to make a living. What ended up preparing me for survival was all that time spent sawing, shaping, and sculpting materials.

He Picked Up a Hammer, and Saw

MD: You build your own instruments. At Le Poisson Rouge you said that Anni Rossi, one of the string players for Thor & Friends, was using a viola you made.

Thor: Those violas I built are based on one I made for use in Swans. I use mostly crepe myrtle for her violas. It's a hard flowering tree. It grows well in central Texas, but I think it's from China.

MD: Have you scavenged in salvage yards for metal to make cymbals with?

Thor: I made one gong out of stainless steel. It was so loud when I was testing it that I was worried about my neighborhood. I had on those hearing protectors for gun ranges when I was hammering it. [laughs] For Swans I made tubular bells out of thick-gauge aluminum tubing. I cut them to length and threaded caps onto the top. Those are the tubular bells I used for the 2014-15 Swans tour.

MD: You once told me that you wanted to record with a Turkish clarinet you picked up in Istanbul. Is that what we hear on the Thor & Friends track "Crusades"?

Thor: Yes, it is. It's an instrument called a duduk. I have one of those, and I've been learning to play it for the last five years. As I started picking up different instruments, the opportunities broadened for me to work with different musicians. You quickly learn that your idea of what your career was supposed to be is not that important. It's not as important as going to where the opportunity is.

MD: Do you use vintage drums at all?

Thor: I use a 1924 Ludwig snare drum, yeah. I thought it was stupid not to travel with a drum like that. That's exactly what that drum wants—to be playing gigs.

MD: Can you explain or describe how you made your hammer dulcimer?

Thor: I have made about five of those electric hammer dulcimers. The first one was for Shearwater, then Swans. They're made of a plank of Osage orange wood, heavy-gauge acoustic-guitar strings, autoharp pegs, and piezo transducers under the bridge for pickups.

MD: What was the first percussion instrument you built?

Thor: I removed the foam material from a Remo practice pad and wound up with a tunable, flat, drum-like surface. It sounds kind of neat. I cut a hole in the bottom of it with a jigsaw, I believe, and I attached it to the 4" electric conduit elbow that I stole from a construction site. It was bent at a 45-degree angle. The finished piece was sort of like an Octoban that was curved. I could tension the head, and I added that to my little drumset, a Japanese kit called a Trump, believe it or not, that my mom had bought me. I started building weird things to augment that kit, because I was so poor after I dropped out of college.

MD: What's the advantage to making your own instruments?

Thor: When you build or alter your own instruments you always end up with something unique. There are millions of people out there using all the same instruments to make music. My friend Lindsey Green has been building arch-top guitars at my shop. He's really talented and precise. I'm learning a lot from him. He's only been building wood things for a couple years.

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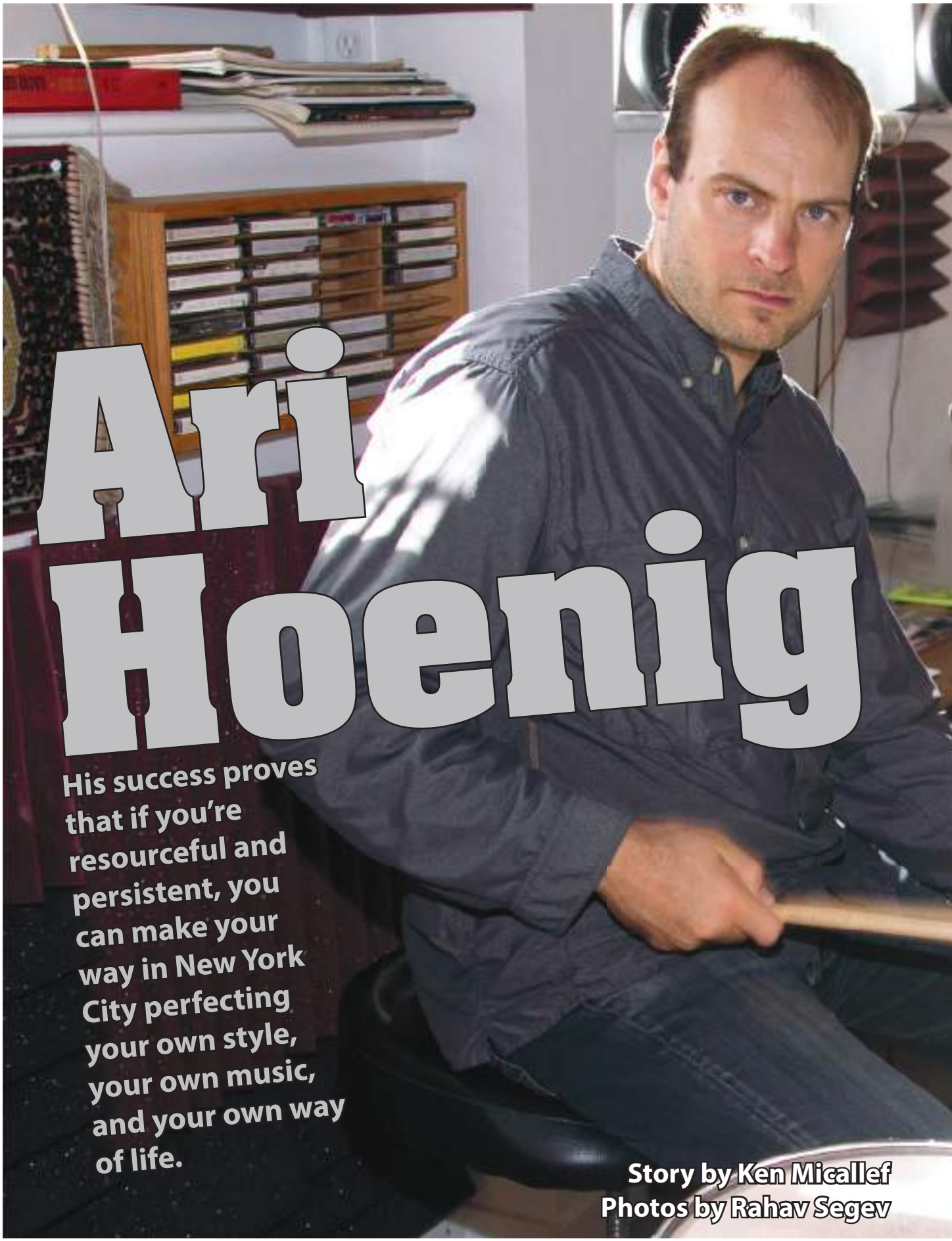

Ari Hoenig

His success proves that if you're resourceful and persistent, you can make your way in New York City perfecting your own style, your own music, and your own way of life.

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Rahav Segev

The Pauper & the Magician, Ari Hoenig's tenth album as a leader, is a perfect platform for the veteran jazz musician's many skills. Hoenig's coherent compositional style, choice of brilliant and simpatico musicians, and white-hot drumming fill the album. Its title track courses through a gentle bolero to a playful through-composed section and rhythmically rambunctious solos. "I'll Think About It" blends up-tempo jazz and daring time conceptions. "The Other" extends a 17/16 time signature over a 4/4 pulse. And Hoenig performs the 1939 folk classic "You Are My Sunshine" as a drum solo vehicle, speaking the melody as clearly as the rhythm. It's all performed with his trademark sensitivity, dynamics, and intimate sense of *burn*.

Hoenig's twelve-years-and-counting residency at Smalls Jazz Club in New York's Greenwich Village includes his various groups as well as the players on *The Pauper & the Magician*: guitarist Gilad Hekselman, saxophonist Tivon Pennicott, pianist Shai Maestro, and bassist Orlando le Fleming. Hoenig remains a busy sideman, his tenure in such groups as the Kenny Werner Trio and Jean-Michel Pilc's Total Madness allowing him the freedom to have both stability and an open-ended contract. Always ready to push the extremes, Ari co-leads Nasty Factorz, a duo with Gaël Horellou that combines jazz drumming and saxophones with saturated electronic effects.

MD: You created a dramatic promotional video for your new album. That's unusual in jazz.
Ari: A friend shot our recording sessions and also created a video, a trailer. I just had to feed everyone! It was fun and different. I make up stories for my daughters, and "the pauper" and "the magician" are two of the characters. The album is a multitude of stories.
MD: When booking work, is a video like that part of the package for promoters?
Ari: Generally not. These days I can luckily get gigs by reputation. And a lot of venues may not be that open to hearing new things that often. The trailer video hasn't helped me get gigs; it was more for promotion of the record.
MD: Do you feel you need to present the story behind the new album to club owners and promoters to set your music apart?
Ari: It's really all about the music, but publicists think differently. Musicians believe their music should be enough to speak for them. That's totally true. It should. But it's [also] probably rare that music in itself will be enough to get through people's attention spans. It's one of the sad things we deal with today.

The *Magician & Pauper* Sessions

MD: A few threads run throughout your new album, including this mind-blowing band and the intricate arrangements and in-depth compositions.
Ari: I wrote the music for this group; some songs are more through-arranged and through-composed, but the story of the pauper and the magician ties it all together. It's my shortest record. I actually recorded enough for two records during those sessions. The second half is all standards. Those will be released in next year's album, including originals.
MD: Does the imagery of the title conjure the music?
Ari: Not as a band. I wrote those songs a year before we recorded. A couple songs, "Lyric" and "Alana," are named for my daughters. It's fairly abstract overall.
MD: The title track includes a bolero, and it's through-composed.
Ari: "The Pauper and the Magician" is essentially two things in one; it's influenced by Charles Ives, who wrote a piece that included visualizations. As one marching band comes into view you hear the other band approaching. Eventually one band becomes prominent.

There's two different, distinct feels or grooves that fit together in my piece. The opening bolero is in a triplet or 12/8 feel. Then over that you hear quintuplets from the next band, so to speak, coming down the street. They're quintuplets grouped in triplets—or sextuplets grouped in five. The difference is whether you're hearing it in six or five. You can hear it either way.
MD: "I'll Think About It" is in a straight-ahead style, finishing with a drum solo. So much clarity, and great dynamics. Is that solo based on four-way coordination?
Ari: I can't remember what the solo sounds like! But I have a way of playing over rhythm changes, which is what that track is. I enjoy working with four-way coordination. Drummers have learned to play so fast and loud and strong. Where I want to progress, and where there's so much room to expand, is with coordination. We haven't really taken coordination that far. Rhythm too—we have really just scraped the surface.
MD: Is "The Other" in 4/4?

"Drummers have learned to play so fast and loud and strong. Where I want to progress, and where there's so much room to expand, is with coordination."

Ari: "The Other" can also be heard in two ways. The bass line is in seventeen, and the band is playing in that time signature for much of the song. As the song progresses it becomes more of a 17/16 over 4/4. The bass line stays in seventeen to the 16th note over 4/4. It creates a kind of long loop. There's also a metal section that's in 4/4. That comes from my love of Meshuggah.
MD: Your cymbal playing in "Alana" really *speaks*. Are you using the metal ring from the brush's handle there?
Ari: Yeah, that gives you a very legato sound. Clarity in general is important to me. Anything I play I try to play clearly. Playing with the metal ring out of the brush handle can give you clarity. You can also scrape it on the cymbal or use it to actually strike the cymbal or the bell. I do that quite a bit.
MD: Did you focus on dynamics to achieve that high level of clarity in your drumming?

Hoenig's Setup

Drums: Yamaha Maple Absolute
A. 8x14 snare
B. 8x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 14x18 bass drum

Cymbals: Bosphorus Lyric series
1. 14" Ari Hoenig Signature hi-hats
2. 21" Ari Hoenig Signature crash/ride
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Ari: Working on dynamics came from some steady gigs I had during college. I had to play at a soft dynamic for the whole night. We could play anything we wanted, but it couldn't be loud.

To the Bosphorus

MD: Why do you play Bosphorus cymbals?
Ari: I have a signature line of Bosphorus cymbals, the Lyric series. It's three cymbals: two ride cymbals and a hi-hat. I spent two days in the Bosphorus factory in Istanbul deciding what I wanted. I went through a lot of cymbals to find something in the ballpark of what I was hearing. I might find a dozen cymbals that I like. Then it was about changing them. They can do anything you want with a cymbal.

MD: Did you give specific directions?
Ari: I learned to use specific words to describe the sound I was hearing. Bosphorus can match any sound you want. I brought a couple cymbals with me that I liked, an old Canadian Zildjian and a Meinl Dragon crash/ride. Bosphorus had ideas and they heard what I was playing; they made something similar to those, and then I made alterations. They didn't emulate the cymbals I brought, but they could be used the same way and had a similar vibe. The final cymbals didn't sound anything like the ones I brought as references. I love them and play them all the time. I can use them for electronic or groove or funk and jazz.
MD: Does your daughter know the cymbals are named after her?
Ari: She thinks she's named after the cymbals. [laughs]

Drumming as Folk Music

MD: You perform "You Are My Sunshine" as a drum song, basically. You've recorded two albums where you play drum solos as songs. That ties you to tradition; that's something Jo Jones might have done.
Ari: Those are my first two records, *Jazzheads* and *Time Travels*, the solo drumming albums. Making music by myself has always been an important part of who I am as a musician. I feel that I have more to offer in that setting than just as a drummer. I can make music alone—it might not be flashy, or cutting edge, but musically I can really say something and make a statement. Usually that comes from playing a song and having the song be very clear and singable. We had a nice moment recently at Smalls where I played "You Are My Sunshine" and the audience sang along and did a whole chorus.
MD: It's harder than it looks to play a melody on the drums clearly and consistently.
Ari: It's something that I have strongly in my ear, but it's taken practice to be able to become comfortable playing on the drums and improvising as well.
MD: I like that it's unhip, in a way. Everyone in New York City is so hip. It's bold to play a simple folk song.
Ari: And it's so musically effective. You can be really musically effective without being hip. Or maybe it *is* hip. It gives you the possibility to really connect with people. Connecting emotionally with people is one of the beauties of what I try to do. I always try to do that. A lot of it is contrast as well. You can't do it all night to be effective.

Single-Minded Practice

MD: What do you practice now?
Ari: Generally I'm working on coordination. It's important for me *not* to work on a lot of things at once but really develop one thing as far as I can. Currently I'm working on playing a 3/4 ostinato and then comping in various rhythms with that. It's a lot to do with coordination. I also play a simple linear funk groove and then, taking one limb—my hand on the ride, for instance—I work on all the variations I can play with that, keeping all the other limbs the same. It's based on ostinatos and coordination; I don't want to think in licks.

If you focus on one thing, then you can just change one small element to make it different. That's a more musically effective approach, because it gives you something to build on. It's theme and development. When you develop something, changing one element and seeing how it feels can lead to improvement. Practicing one thing can help you more than practicing many things.
MD: You're a serious jazz drummer, but you only use matched grip?
Ari: I never use traditional grip, though I used to play brushes with traditional grip. A lot of drummers in jazz use matched; there are differences, but I don't feel one grip is clearly better. There may be specific things one grip is better for than another, but the differences are very slight. I've never felt I had to overcome anything because I play matched grip.

Home Alone!

MD: Is booking a jazz group tough these days?
Ari: Honestly, I haven't tried for a long time. Having the Smalls residency means I don't have to call clubs and booking agents. I've done a lot of tours with my groups in the past, but I'm not actively booking now. I got burnt out with that process. I'm at my best when playing a lot locally. I don't have an urge to hit the road. Take Paul Motian as an example. He kept playing, but he didn't tour. If you wanted to see Paul, you had to come to New York City. And people did. Let the other musicians get on the plane! The conditions for touring aren't quite as they should be, and I'm spoiled being at home. That's working just fine for me.

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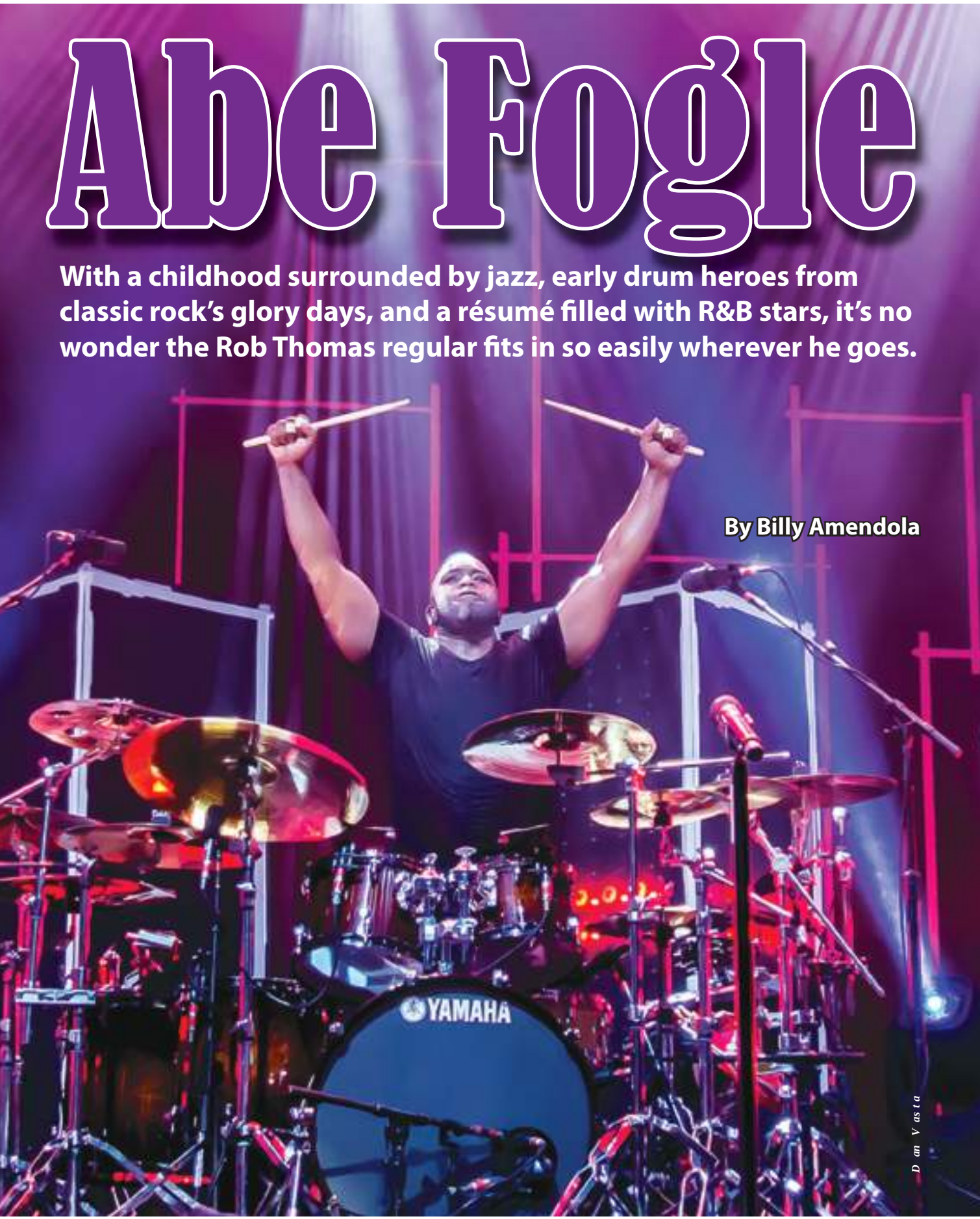
Abe Fogle

With a childhood surrounded by jazz, early drum heroes from classic rock's glory days, and a résumé filled with R&B stars, it's no wonder the Rob Thomas regular fits in so easily wherever he goes.

By Billy Amendola



Dan Vasta

In 2005, when Abe Fogle got the call to tour with Matchbox Twenty frontman Rob Thomas, he instantly jumped to action. Gerald Heyward had played on Thomas's debut solo album, *Something to Be*, and many drummers were awestruck by the R&B vet's performance on it. But Heyward couldn't do the tour because of previous commitments to Beyoncé and Destiny's Child. Fogle went headlong into studying the groundbreaking tracks, and twelve years later he's still Thomas's go-to drummer.

Putting aside Fogle's obvious talent, it's not surprising that the relationship between him and Thomas has lasted so long. Both are easygoing yet highly professional, and they share a great relationship on and off stage. "Rob is a brilliant songwriter and a great person," Fogle says. "After thirty years of playing drums professionally, I have to say that this is one of the best gigs I've ever had the pleasure to play."

Thomas is quick to return the compliment. "The relationship between a singer and his drummer can't be underestimated," he tells *MD*. "Knowing that the backbeat will be where you want it to be gives you the ability to land your phrasing where you want. You're the water, and the drummer is the rock. I say every night that Abe is the heart and soul of the RT band. And I *mean* it every night."

While his chops, power, and pocket make him such a valuable musical commodity, it's Fogle's sensitivity, humility, and willingness to share credit with crew members such as his drum tech, Ricky Sanders, that make him the ideal addition to any tour. "I salute all the techs and roadies that make a tour even more fun," Abe says. "Because of them, you can just sit back and focus on your art and perform to the best of your abilities. There's nothing like having a family feeling on the road. And for a drummer, having the right tech is everything."

Fogle was born in 1964, on the Lower East Side of New York City, and moved with his family to Teaneck, New Jersey, at age thirteen. Later he studied at Rutgers University and the New School for Social Research, experiences that he points to as the reason he's been able to work in many different musical genres. Like a hard-rock drummer with flashes of jazz and gospel influences—and a whole lot of funk—Fogle has successfully powered recordings and tours with a long and diverse group of artists, including Regina Belle, Guy, Freddie Jackson, Najee, Miki Howard, Lalah Hathaway, Art Porter, Kenny Garrett, Alex Bugnon, LeVert, Faith Evans, Kelis, Beth Hart, Phoebe Snow, India Arie, Nine Days, Kool and the Gang, Johnny Kemp, Peter Fish, Teddy Riley's Wreckx-n-Effect, D'Angelo, Chico DeBarge, Hot Tuna, and, most recently, Bruce Springsteen and Bob Seger backup singer Curtis King Jr., whose solo project Fogle recorded several tracks on. *Modern Drummer* caught up with Abe as he was coming through town on Rob Thomas's latest co-headlining tour, with Counting Crows.

MD: How did you land the gig with Rob Thomas?

Abe: I was playing gigs on the New York scene with my good friend Matt Beck, a killer musician who's Rob's MD on tour and a member of Matchbox Twenty, and he came to me one day and put a bug in my ear that there might be an opening in the drum chair of Rob's solo project. The massive Santana hit "Smooth," which Rob sang on, was blazing up the charts; in fact I'd already been playing it in some of the wedding bands I was working with. And I knew of some Matchbox songs, though I hadn't heard any of Rob's solo music yet. So I immediately went to work, listening to and playing along to his first solo album, *Something to Be*. The grooves that Gerald Heyward played were killer, and I really liked the music upon first listening.

MD: How do you prepare before heading out on tour?

Abe: Preparation for tours can come in many forms. I usually try to get in as much playing time as I can before heading out. That way my stamina is up to the level of the demands of the road. I've been touring now for about thirty years, and I'm not done yet. It just seems that in the earlier stages of my career, my stamina could get me through almost anything. When you're a bit older, some things aren't as automatic as they used to be, so it's important to prepare yourself for the road ahead of time. But once you've done it a few times, it starts to become second nature and you can find yourself a lot better prepared for what may come your way. Being well stretched and loose before gigs helps more than you may realize. And breathing is paramount, which also allows me to focus mentally on the tasks ahead.

MD: Let's go back to the beginning—why drums?

Abe: It was a happy and joyous accident. I was around fifteen, hanging with a friend of mine at his house in New Jersey, listening to music, and he had a drumset in his bedroom. I sat down, and the first thing I asked myself was, *What can I maintain differently with each limb?* I ended up coming up with the disco beat, and it was love at first strike. [laughs] Just about every day for the next few weeks I begged my dad for a drumset. He finally gave in and bought me a kick drum, a cymbal that sounded like cardboard, and a rack tom. But my dad was smart like that. He wanted to first see if it was a phase before going out and

buying me a huge kit.

From there it was barter and pawnshops, looking for the other pieces to fill in the gaps. I had a three-piece kit for about two years, until my dad saw how serious I was about playing. He then encouraged me to start saving for my next kit on my own, so I got a part-time job after school. After about six weeks I saved enough for half, and then my dad put in the rest. I had my first real drumset. So thanks to Chris, Vinny, and the Bertolini family—and, of course, my dad.

MD: Who were some of your early influences?

Abe: My very earliest influences in music were not drummers. My dad was the biggest influence on me. Being a non-player, he couldn't read a note, but he could tell you if you played a wrong one. [laughs] And his insight was tremendous. He may not have been able to say it in musical terms, but he always got the point when he had to give me positive reinforcement. And he turned me on to cats like John Coltrane and Miles Davis. Because of his influence on me, I also got into Elvin Jones, Max Roach, and Jimmy Cobb. Not to mention the fact that some of them were friends with my dad as well. My dad was a big jazz fan, so every car ride with him was a musical journey.

Some of my friends and I were listening to Kool and the Gang and Parliament Funkadelic, but I really enjoyed listening to the Who, the Beatles, Kiss, Led Zeppelin, and Yes. I had the funk and R&B influences coming in from my older siblings as well, but I was really a rock fan, so my drumming influences were rock cats like John Bonham, Bill Bruford, and Keith Moon.

MD: When you started getting more serious, what was your practice routine?

Abe: I started off playing to records that I loved. I did my best to cop the feel and groove from whatever the drummer on the recording was playing.

MD: Did you have favorites?

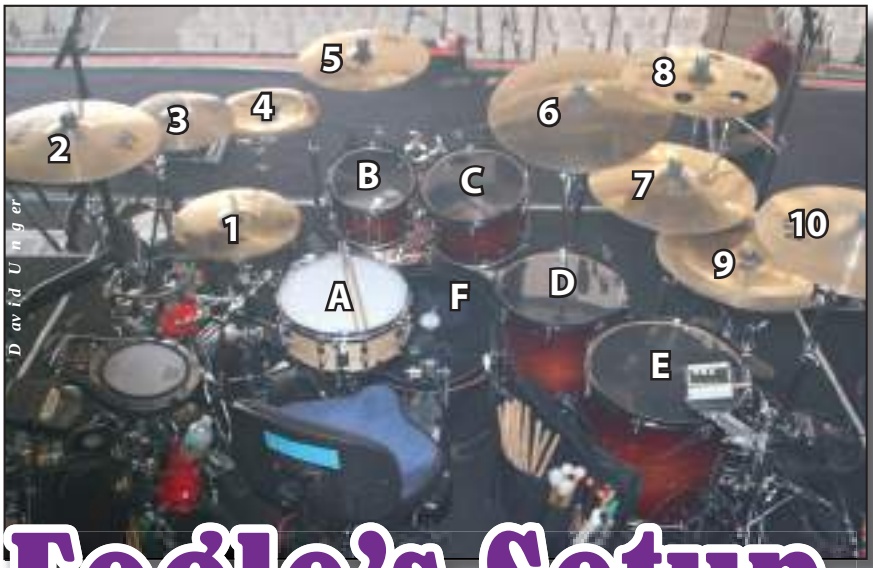
Abe: Yes, a few of my favorites were "The Ocean" and "Dancing Days" by Led Zeppelin, Boston's "Don't Look Back," Joe Jackson's *Look Sharp* album, Kansas's *Leftoverture*, any Yes album, and Funkadelic's "One Nation Under a Groove" and "(Not Just) Knee Deep." That really helped me a great deal in terms of establishing a level of versatility in my playing. When my dad heard how serious I was—he was constantly monitoring my progress—he got me into drum lessons. I had an amazing first teacher in Mr. Bob Heater. He allowed me to open up and really approach the drums not only from a technical standpoint but also from a "what feels good to you" standpoint.

MD: What are a few things that Mr. Heater would teach you?

Abe: We would practice technique from the [Charley] Wilcoxon and [George Lawrence] Stone books, but he would allow me to bring in my favorite tunes to play along to later in the lessons. He was a huge influence on me as well, as were my other teachers, like Kim Plainfield, Rob Wallis, Michael Carvin, Ralph Peterson Jr., Rod Morgenstein, and others who truly believed in me. I tell you, when you have someone who has your back watching you grow and rooting for you along the way, it *really* goes far. Not everyone is blessed to have that in their lives, so I'm forever grateful to them.

MD: You're effective in many genres, but what styles are you most comfortable playing? Do you have a preference?

Abe: Thank you! I find comfort in just playing great music. My joy



David Unger

Fogle's Setup

Drums: Yamaha Live Custom Oak
A. 14" Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute snare
B. 10" tom
C. 12" tom
D. 14" floor tom
E. 16" floor tom
F: 22" bass drum

Hardware: Yamaha, including Flying Dragon bass drum pedal

Accessories: Porter and Davies throne, Tama RW105 Rhythm Watch, Roland Rhythm Coach, Pintech Dingbat triggers

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 14" AA Flat Hats
2. 17" AA Medium crash
3. 12" AAX splash
4. 12" HH Mini China
5. 16" HH Medium Thin crash
6. 20" Rod Morgenstein ride
7. 18" AA Medium crash
8. 16" HHX Evolution O-Zone crash
9. 18" AA China
10. 18" AAX Stage crash

Percussion: wind chimes, LP tambourine

comes from knowing that I'm able to give the other musicians on the bandstand what they want to make the session or tour go smoothly and successfully. I don't really have any preferences, but if you twisted my arm I'd say funk and rock, but I don't hesitate to splash in some bebop along the way.

MD: How do you approach the parts from the records that other drummers have recorded, to make them your own?

Abe: Good question. I listen, then I listen, then I listen *again*. I try to internalize the parts and create a platform, as if I were the cat on the session. There are times when you can be called to fill in for someone, and the other band members are so used to the other guy on the gig that everything else just sounds wrong, no matter what you bring to the table. That's where you internalize the parts and step into the other cat's shoes before you bring your own sneakers to the gig. [laughs] Once there, you can start looking for ways to make things a little more like they're your own.

Another thing I was taught by my great teachers was to have patience and always try to understand what the music is dictating. Don't bring your fusion chops to a polka gig, but always be prepared and adept enough to know the difference.

MD: What other advice can you share with our readers about becoming better drummers and musicians in general?

Abe: I strongly encourage *MD* readers to embrace the art of consistency and enjoy where that journey takes you. Let your mistakes guide you to a greater place of strength in your playing. Sometimes mistakes turn into happy accidents.

In terms of what to practice, if you're practicing to be a better drum-and-bugle-corps cat, your technique is predicated upon factors that may not even come into play if you're looking to be a great pocket/rock/gospel drummer, and vice versa. Practice the things that will get you closer to your personal goals. But the one thing I'd encourage *all* drummers to do is to learn to make the metronome your best friend.

The Official Drums of

Abe Fogle

Yamaha artist since 2005, Abe Fogle has held the drum throne for some big names in rock, jazz and funk. Currently, you can find him on tour with multi-platinum artist Rob Thomas. A world-class drummer true to the song, Abe is able to connect with an arena full of fans, and his personality comes through with every performance. For his sound and the durability that he needs to withstand the rigors of touring and session work, where you hear Abe, you'll find his Yamaha drums.

Get to know Abe here:
4wrd.it/OfficialFogle

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www.yamahadrums.com

– Greg Vogel Photography

GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

Nile's George Kollias

Interview by John Martinez
Photos by Alex Solca

Drums: Pearl Masters Maple Complete in Matte Black Mist finish
A. 6.5x14 Reference Pure snare
B. 5x12 Firecracker snare
C. 7x8 tom
D. 8x10 tom
E. 9x12 tom
F. 10x13 tom
G. 14x14 floor tom
H. 16x16 floor tom
I. 18x22 bass drum
Not shown is a 12x14 tom that's usually positioned above the 12" snare.

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 14" HHX Power hi-hats
2. 20" AAX Metal ride (alternate: 20" HH Leopard ride)
3. 14" Dave Weckl HHX Evolution China
4. 17" AAX X-treme Chinese
5. 7" HHX Evolution splash
6. 17" AAX Dark crash
7. 8" HH China Kang on 8" AAX Air splash
8. 10" AAX splash (alternate: 10" HHX Evolution splash)
9. 17" AAX Studio crash
10. 10" AA Mini-Hats
11. 18" HHX X-plosion crash
12. 22" AAX Metal ride (alternate: 22" HH Leopard ride)
13. 18" HHX Evolution Chinese
14. 19" AAX Chinese
15. 18" AAX O-zone crash
16. 13" AAX Regular hi-hat top over AAX Fast bottom

Drumheads: Evans HD Dry snare batters and Hazy 300 snare-sides, G2 Clear tom batters and G1 Clear resonants, EQ2 Clear bass drum batters with EQ patches and Inked by Evans Nile-logo resonants

Hardware: Pearl ICON drum rack and cymbal arms, H2000 series remote and standard hi-hat stand, 900 series auxiliary hi-hat, S1030 snare stands with spiked feet, and Roadster round throne; Axis George Kollias signature bass drum pedals and pedal triggers

Sticks: Vic Firth George Kollias signature

Electronics: Roland TM-2 trigger module

George Kollias's main touring kit is a Reference Pure that stays in Greece. When touring the U.S., he uses this Masters series kit with a Reference Pure snare. "I'm really in love with these drums," says Kollias. "This Masters set has a shorter sustain, which is really good when I tour because there aren't too many overtones. The drums also feature Super Hoops II rims, which play a role in making the drums sound really good."

Regarding hardware, Kollias says, "I've been with Axis for many years. The beaters on my pedals are based on the Sonic Hammer that they used to have, and I asked them to make this specific beater. The old beaters used to melt when you played super-fast, and they would stick to the head. These are a harder plastic, so they don't get so hot."

When asked how he likes to tune his drums, George says, "I'm probably one of the few metal drummers who likes an open kick with no muffling. The music is very fast, so I need to trigger. I play 22" kicks—most people use 20" or even 18" drums. Some people tune their drums really tight, but I like mine very loose. My snare is loose as hell—like old-school thrash."

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Threes and Fives

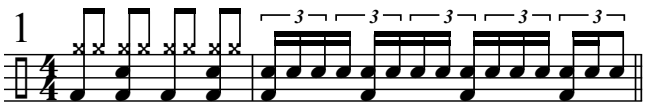
Fills With Odd Groupings

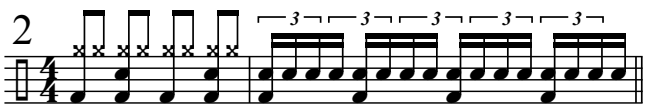
by Jayson Brinkworth

I've always found it fun and interesting to explore the possibilities available when using common subdivisions such as 8ths, 16ths, or 8th-note triplets. For example, we can play a double-stroke roll or paradiddle sticking within 8th-note triplets to create a rolling, over-the-bar feeling.

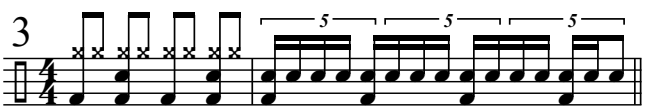
When teaching, I stress the importance of exploring different sticking possibilities, especially within 16th notes. And although we're only working with sixteen notes in one measure of 4/4, there are endless options.

The following exercises explore some three- and five-note groupings using 16th notes. In Exercises 1–4, a four-on-the-floor groove leads into each phrase, and we'll continue playing quarter notes on the bass drum during the fill to feel each three- and five-note grouping move in and out of the pulse. In Exercises 1 and 3, we'll end each phrase on the "&" of beat 4. In Exercises 2 and 4, we'll add one extra note to the "a" of beat 4 to fill out the final 16th note.

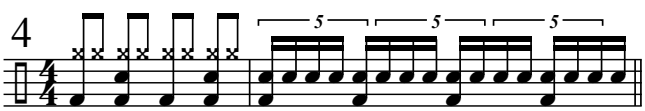
1

R L L R L L R L L R L L R L L
L R R L R R L R R L R R L R R

2

R L L R L L R L L R L L R L R
L R R L R R L R R L R R L R L

3

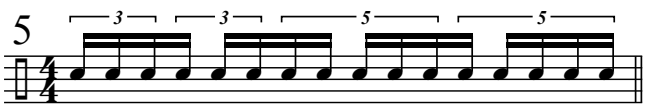


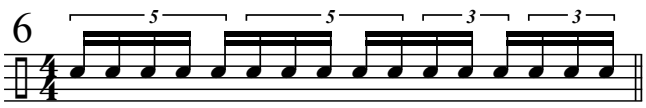
R L R R L R L R R L R L R R L
R L L R L R L L R L R L L R L

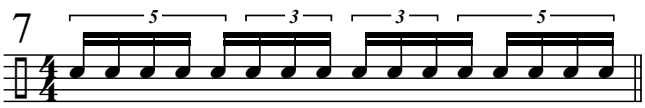
4

R L R R L R L R R L R L R L L
R L L R L R L L R L R L L R L

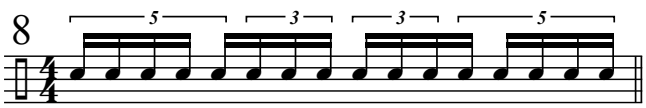
I like to experiment with the following stickings for three-note groupings: RLL, LRR, RRL, or LLR. When working with five-note groupings, I usually prefer using a paradiddle sticking, or one of its inversions, while adding an extra note to the end of the grouping. These stickings allow me to free up some mental energy to concentrate on how the phrase feels and sounds.

The last four exercises combine three- and five-note groupings together. The bass drum is omitted, but feel free to place it on quarter notes or at the start of each grouping. Also try moving your hands to different parts of the kit to experiment with orchestration.

5

R L L R L L R L R R L R L R R L

6

R L L R L R L L R L R R L R R L

7

R R L R L R L L R R L R R L R L

8

R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L

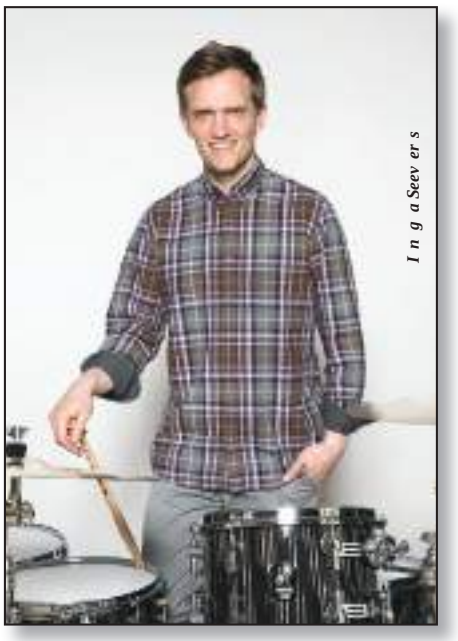
These ideas present many possibilities when experimenting with stickings, accents, and more. Great players such as Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Weckl, Dennis Chambers, and others incorporate this concept. Just like any other exercise, practice slowly, be patient, and have fun!

Jayson Brinkworth is a freelance drummer, educator, and clinician in Canada. For more info, visit jaysonbrinkworth.com.

Groove Construction

Part 10: Exploring a Killer Cowbell Pattern

by Jost Nickel



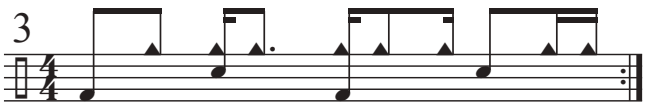
In this lesson we'll examine a pattern that I get asked about often. I recorded this groove on the song "Rave Against the Machine" with Jan Delay and Disko No. 1 in Germany some time ago, and I encourage you to check it out in the video on moderndrummer.com to hear its phrasing. Although the exercises in this lesson are notated with a straight feel, they should be shuffled with a 16th-note-triplet feel. Let's break down the groove starting with the cowbell figure.

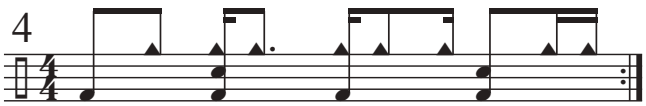
1

Now we'll add backbeats on beats 2 and 4.

2

Next we'll add the bass drum. We'll use a simple pattern to start and place the bass drum on beats 1 and 3.

3

Here's another simple but useful bass drum variation. Add quarter notes on all four beats, and make sure that the snare backbeats are in perfect unison with the bass drum.

4

Next we'll add ghost notes. In Part 5 of this series (September 2016), I introduced a method of working with ghost notes called an ostinato approach. Exercise 5 introduces a ghost-note ostinato along with quarter notes on the hi-hat.

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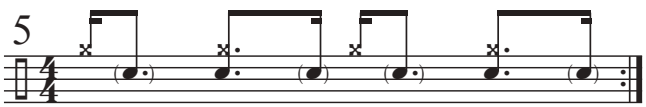
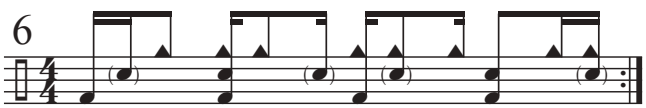
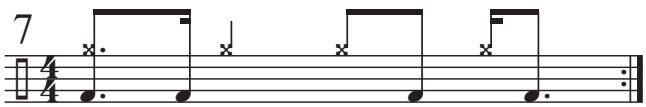
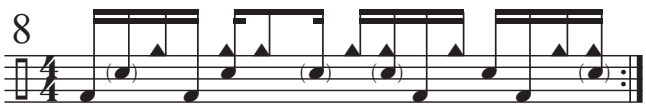

Now we'll add these ghost notes to Exercise 4. If you're having trouble, try adding one ghost note at a time while playing the rest of the groove.

6

Now we'll add the bass drum figure from the original "Rave Against the Machine" groove. Start by playing the kick pattern along with quarter notes on the hi-hat.

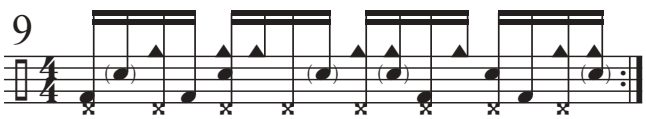
7



Next add this bass drum figure to Exercise 6. Again, if you're having trouble, try adding one bass drum stroke at a time.

8

Finally, we'll add 8th notes with the hi-hat foot. To me these serve as a counterpoint to the syncopated cowbell figure and sound great.

9



If you're interested in exploring more groove ideas, check out my book *Jost Nickel's Groove Book*.

Jost Nickel is a top session and touring drummer in Germany, as well as an international clinician endorsing Sonor, Meinl, Aquarian, Vic Firth, and Beyerdynamic.

Swiss Rudiments

Basel Drumming, Part 4

by Claus Hessler

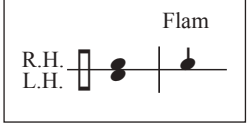
In this lesson we'll take a look at a song from *Camp Duty Update,* my most recent book about the history of rudiments and their European roots. The melody of the tune "The Slow Scotch" was used in nineteenth-century military duty calls in the U.S. It was part of the routine to wake up troops and was typically the second song played, after "Three Camps." I arranged a new drum part for the traditional "Slow Scotch" melody while still referring to the theme of the original song. I use Swiss and French rudimental ideas, as well as some phrases inspired by those styles.

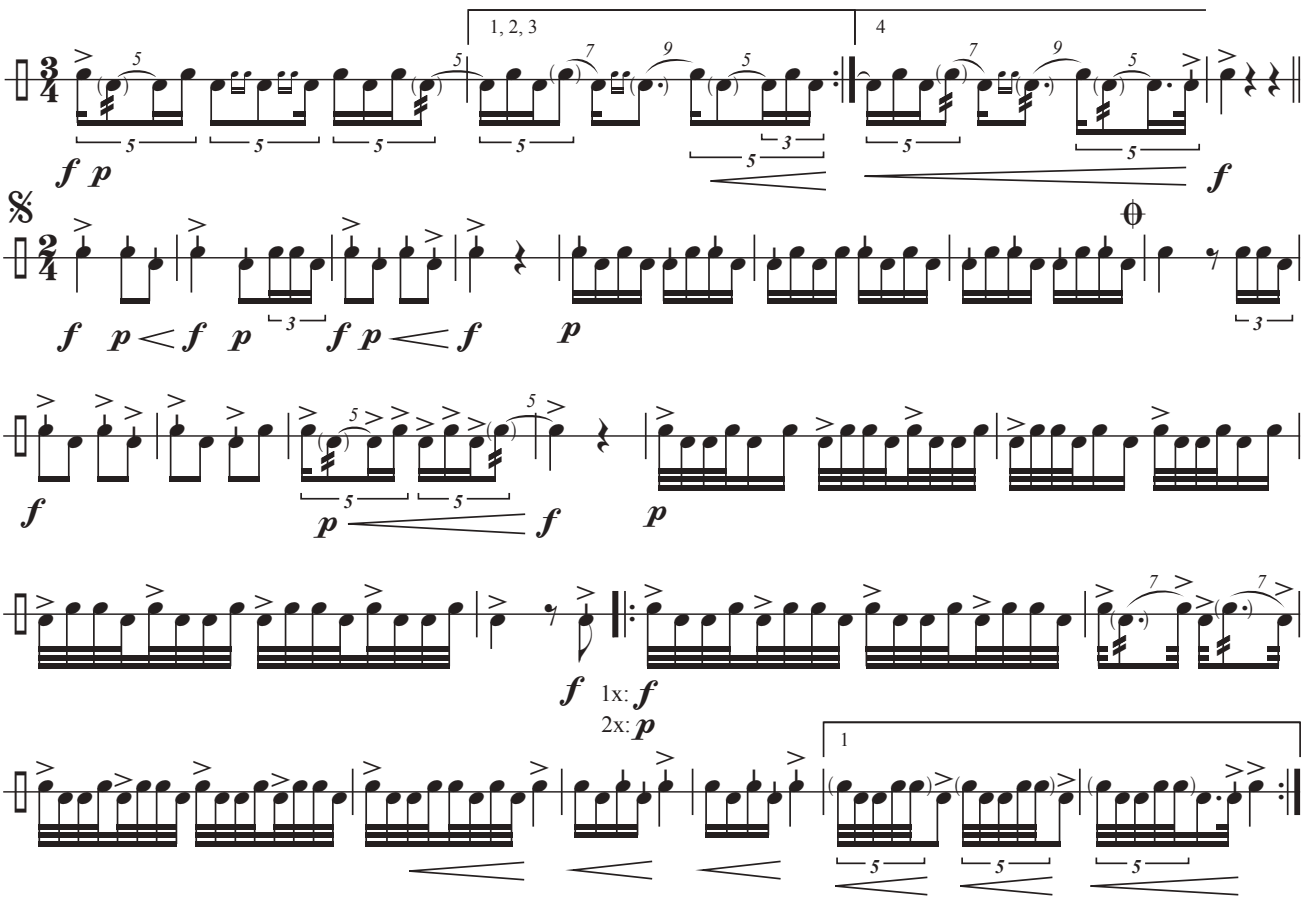
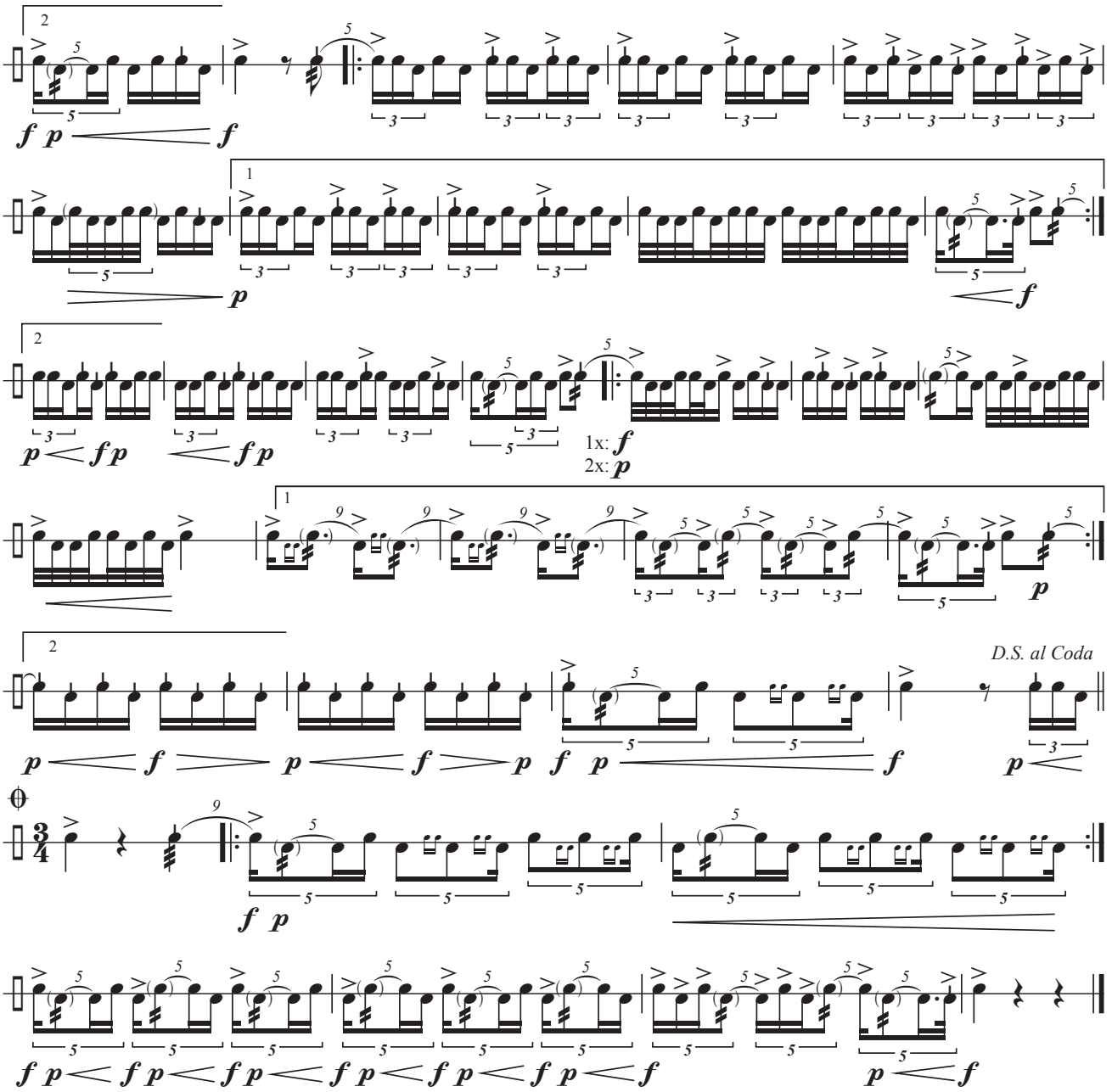
The "Slow Scotch" doesn't typically have an intro as shown here. However, Swiss compositions known as "Retraites," or retreats, usually have opening sections and additional endings that feature a complex construction of rolls. Similar to a "Tagwacht," a "Retraite" employs a logical and strict way of arranging rudimental combinations. Usually the piece starts with simple ideas before progressing into more advanced structures. In this month's piece, I applied the "Slow Scotch" theme within a modified "Retraite" drum arrangement.

Most of the strokes in this tune and their rhythmic structures have been covered in previous installments of this series. However, it's worth examining the nine-stroke roll on beat 2 of the second measure. These figures are phrased using a quintuplet subdivision, so the ruff should be considered part of the nine-stroke roll and played on the second quintuplet partial.

You can check out a video explanation of this piece, along with an audio file of the song played on a rope-tension drum, at moderndrummer.com. If you're interested in more of these rudimental concepts and explanations, check out my book *Camp Duty Update*.

MUSIC KEY





Claus Hessler is an active clinician in Europe, Asia, and the United States. For more, visit claushessler.com.

Odd Subdivision Offbeats

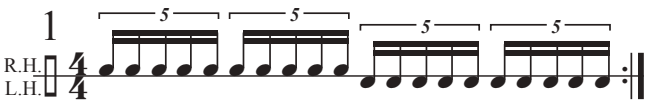
Ten- and Fourteen-Note Groupings

by Aaron Edgar

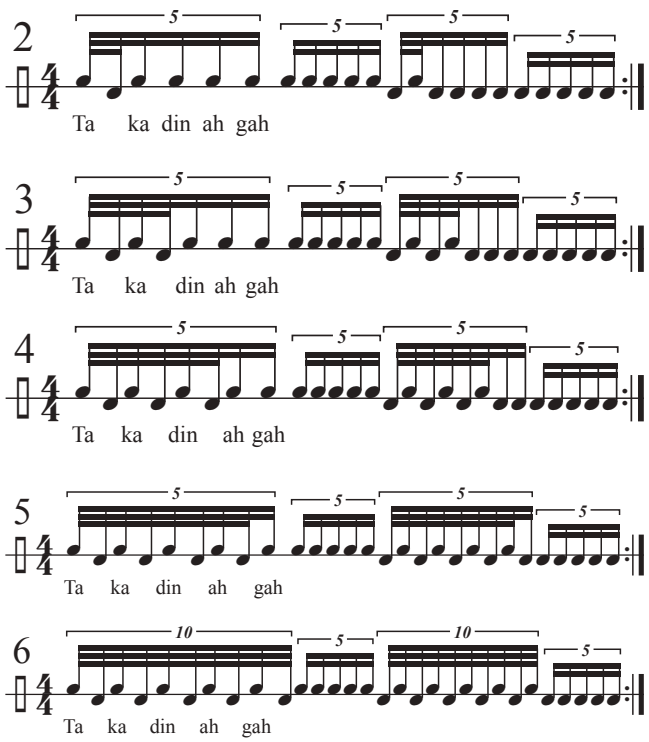
When examining 32nd notes, we see that they're twice as fast as 16th notes. Similarly, we can take this idea of doubling subdivisions and apply it to any grouping. In this lesson we're going to explore ten- and fourteen-note subdivisions, which can be viewed as the doubled equivalent of quintuplets and septuplets. When playing ten-note groupings as single strokes, your lead hand will play standard quintuplets while the opposite hand plays between them.

Exercises 1–6 outline a hand workout that you can use as a speed and endurance drill, and they'll also help you develop the placement of each partial in five- and ten-note groupings.

In Exercise 1, play two beats of quintuplets with your right hand followed by two beats of quintuplets with the left. Count the subdivision out loud using the syllables "ta-ka-din-ah-gah," use your metronome, and make sure all notes are even and relaxed. Exercise 1 lays the foundation for the next five examples.

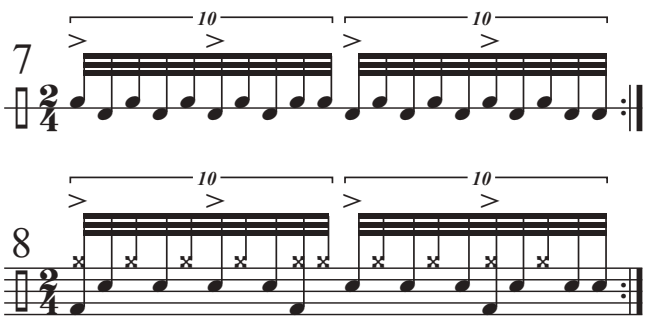


Examples 2–6 fill in all the offbeat partials of the quintuplets one at a time so that you can focus on how each note of the subdivision feels. You should still be able to feel Exercise 1 while adding the extra partials. Go slowly at first, and make sure to count out loud and focus on even and consistent spacing. Notice that the additional notes fall in between your counting.

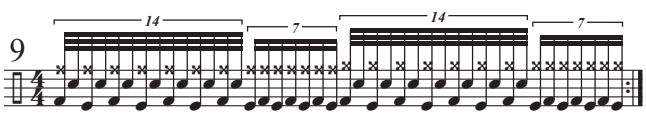


Once you're comfortable with the previous exercises, run them in sequence. Play each one until the rhythm feels comfortable before moving on. Once you have the quintuplet version down, try the same exercises with a septuplet subdivision. Use the syllables "ta-ka-din-ah-ge-na-gah" to count septuplets.

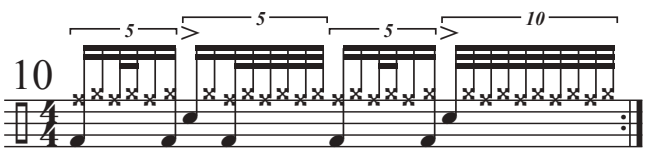
These drills can be a lot of fun when you take them beyond the practice pad. Exercise 7 alternates the single-stroke sticking by doubling the last two partials of each ten-note grouping, and Exercise 8 applies this pattern to the drumset. The accents in these two examples outline 8th notes.

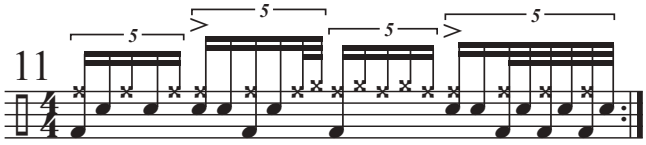


Exercise 9 utilizes septuplets to expand on Exercise 8 while incorporating a double bass pattern. Count out loud using the septuplet syllables. The counts align with the right hand on the ride cymbal during the first half of the bar and with the left hand on the hi-hat during the second half.



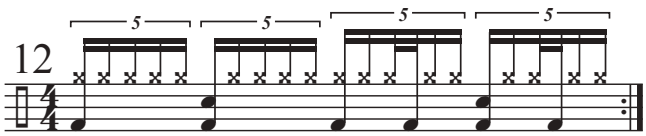
Exercises 10 and 11 apply short bursts of quintuplet offbeats to grooves.



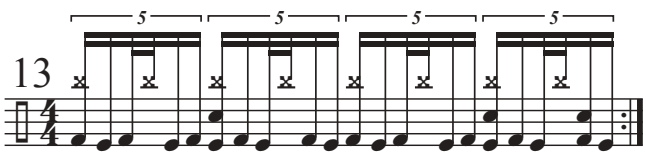


Also try using individual offbeat notes to create polyrhythmic feels. Example 12 is a quintuplet interpretation of a four-on-the-floor 16th-note hi-hat groove in which the bass drum plays 8th notes in the second half of the bar. The "&" of each beat falls in between the third and fourth quintuplet partial, or "din" and "ah."

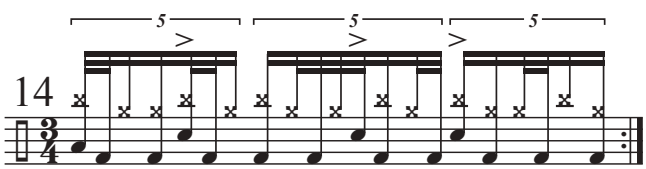
To practice this exercise, isolate the second half of the bar with the additional bass drum notes. When you have the hang of it, play the whole measure. Focus on making the quintuplets feel consistent, and make sure your bass drum sounds solid and even underneath.



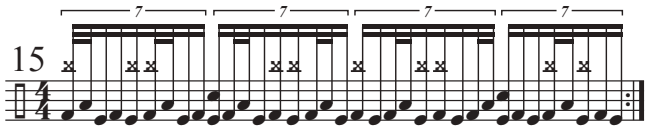
Exercise 13 places quintuplets on the bass drum and straight 8th notes on a stack or China.



Playing notes on every third partial of each ten-note grouping creates an interesting effect. In Exercise 14, we'll try this by playing a ten-over-three polyrhythm with ten equally spaced notes on the bass drum across a bar of 3/4. Our right hand plays quintuplets on the hi-hats while accenting a stack on the first and fourth partials of the quintuplet ("ta" and "ah"). The first left-hand note is meant for a floor tom or gong drum.



We can expand on the polyrhythmic possibilities of this idea by creating rhythms that are entirely on the offbeats. If we take a rhythm like the seven side of a seven-over-four polyrhythm and move it to the offbeats, we end up with a polyrhythmic element that occupies a unique rhythmic space.

In Exercise 15 the first, fourth, and fifth notes of a septuplet are played with the right hand between a cymbal stack and snare. The bass drum plays septuplets while the left hand plays the seven-over-four polyrhythm starting on the first septuplet offbeat. The left-hand rhythm is notated for a floor tom or gong drum, but experiment with its placement and move it around the toms to create melodies.

These ideas may not be the kind of rhythmic tools that you're going to pull out every single day, but they're an incredibly fun and effective way to work on your technique while also engaging your brain. If you happen to have a group of musicians willing to grit their teeth through this rhythmic storm, you'll be able to create some unique music.

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. He teaches weekly live lessons on Drumeo.com. You can find his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for private lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.

Beyond the Noteheads

Benefits and Strategies for Transcribing, Part 1

by Steve Fidyk

I recently thought about my first lesson with the great drummer and educator Ed Soph. I was eighteen years old at the time, and my parents drove me from our home in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to see Ed in New Haven, Connecticut. Before leaving for the lesson, I proudly packed every method book that I'd worked on into an old suitcase. Once we arrived and got settled in his upstairs teaching studio, he began to thumb through my books, briefly commenting on the vast number of materials I'd studied.

He then asked me to play something. I sat behind the drums for what seemed like an eternity of uncomfortable silence, not knowing what to do. I asked, "Would you like to hear a swing beat, or a rock beat, or a solo?" He responded, "Play something you feel comfortable with."

Ed was the first teacher who asked questions of me, which helped to introduce a thoughtful approach to playing and studying the instrument. Before this lesson with Ed, I wasn't very confident playing diverse styles of music. I came from a rigorous method-book background and didn't clearly understand how to connect the concepts from these books to the music I aspired to make. Until this point, I was assigned exercises, one page after another, without knowing how those exercises would help my ability to improvise on the drumset. The question I needed to answer for myself was, *What music do I want to play professionally, and how was I preparing myself to that end?*

Ed was the first teacher to ask me to transcribe ideas on paper. Initially it was ride cymbal rhythms from drummers like Jimmy Cobb and Shelly Manne. I eventually worked up to accompaniment patterns from drummers like Max Roach, Art Blakey, Roy Haynes, and Philly Joe Jones. This experience led to further study on the subject with the great drummer and educator John Riley. John also had me transcribing accompaniment patterns from legendary drummers, as well as solos that were constructed on song forms from standard tunes. In our lessons, we did a great deal of intensive and critical listening, and we discussed how the drummers on each recording were fitting into the texture and flow of the music.

Listening for Landmarks

When starting to transcribe, sit down and listen to one of your favorite recordings without interruption or distraction. As it plays, determine the arrangement's format—listen for an introduction, melody, solos, shout chorus, and other elements. What's the form of the tune (blues, ABA, AABA)? Once you can hear where these landmarks are in the music, listen to how the drummer is working through them.

Try asking yourself the following while listening: How is this player accompanying the music while outlining these landmark sections of the tune? Does the drummer on the recording change texture, dynamics, orchestrations, or sticks while keeping time and interacting with each soloist? Jot down what you hear and try playing along to the recording. Start with your ride cymbal, and pay attention to the drummer's intensity, sound, and touch.

Next find a recorded example of your favorite drummer playing, and play along with it—again keeping the same sound, pacing, and intensity as the original. Try softly adding the bass drum to work on your feathering skills. Once you have control of these sounds, work on some technique with your favorite recording that features the brushes, and listen for the pulse and articulation you're achieving with each fan. Practicing sounds from the drumset individually before combining them together can help produce a solid groove and consistent sound once you blend each element together. Try selecting recordings that feature these individual instruments, and focus your attention on each as you play along throughout the phrase.

When performing with a band, the drummer is constantly improvising and creating ideas that connect musically with the composition. Transcribing time and solo examples, bass lines, and melodies can help increase your understanding and provide you with the language of a specific style. Patiently working through and doing your own transcribing can help you understand how and why specific ideas were played in the moment from a recorded performance.

In Part 2 of this series we'll discuss methods for transcribing, tools for the job, and some of my favorite phrases from legendary players like Harvey Mason, Roy Haynes, Jimmy Cobb, and Alan Dawson.

Steve Fidyk has performed with Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit stevefidyk.com.

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A New Year, A New You?

Reviewing and Renewing Your Goals, Part 2

by Russ Miller

Welcome to Part 2 of our new year/new you discussion. Last month we talked about reflection. This time we're covering the topics of imitation and experience.

> "The most important thing to remember is this: To be ready at any moment to give up what you are for what you might become."
>
> —W. E. B. Du Bois (sociologist and historian)

Imitation

The word "imitation" can have negative connotations. We often think of it as copying someone or not being original. But the actual definition is to follow or endeavor to follow, as a model or example. Following a model or example is a much more positive slant on the idea of imitating something or someone.

We gain knowledge in many ways. Someone can freely give us information, we can research facts on our own, or we can observe the actions of others. Observing others gives us a chance to make a determination about whether or not what we are seeing is something we would like to do. It helps to make a list of things that you see other players do that you'd like to apply to your own drumming or career path.

I search for things that will inspire growth. Sometimes all that takes is hearing something fresh and unique being executed at a high level. When you find something that inspires you, be sure to look deeper beneath the surface. If you discover a great lick you'd like to work into your playing, don't just copy it. Analyze the underlying concept of the lick, develop a system to assimilate it, and then practice toward incorporating the lick into your playing.

Keep a watchful eye out for things that inspire you, and use those inspirations to help you create new short- and long-term goals. Sometimes when I see drummers use their gear in a fresh way, whether it's stacking cymbals, incorporating electronics, or applying some unusual tuning techniques, I'll experiment with those ideas on my own kit for a few weeks. Those explorations have led me to some really cool discoveries. Be open and let your favorite drummers be a model or example for you to gain new ideas.

Experience

Now let's talk about experience. In theory,

how you play and approach the drums should be changing all the time due to your unique experiences. Hopefully you don't sound the same today as you did ten years ago. The great thing about experience is that no one can take it from you, and no one can have the same exact experiences as you. Even if some things have felt negative or difficult to deal with, learn from them so you know what not to do next time. Ask yourself the following questions:

How has my playing changed this past year?

What adjustments can I make in my playing and practicing that will help assimilate the inspiration I've recently found from others?

Remember that you can also gain knowledge from the guidance of someone else. That is why having a great teacher or mentor is important. All you need to do is search for someone who can do something that you can't, and ask him or her for some lessons or career advice. Remember how I wanted to improve my touch on the drumset? I searched out jazz great Peter Erskine, who has an impeccable sound. Just make sure you're drawing information from the most qualified source you can find. There are great teachers all around the world who don't have huge discographies but *do* have amazing technical abilities that they can share with you. Conversely, there are tons of amazing players with world-class musical experiences who know nothing about technique, yet maybe can provide great advice on how to further your career.

I hope this two-part series has inspired you to reflect on, renew, or even restart your drumming career in the new year. We're all on this journey together. See you next month!

Russ Miller has recorded and/or performed with Ray Charles, Cher, Nelly Furtado, and the Psychedelic Furs and has played on soundtracks for *The Boondock Saints*, *Rugrats Go Wild*, and *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, among others. For more information, visit russmiller.com.

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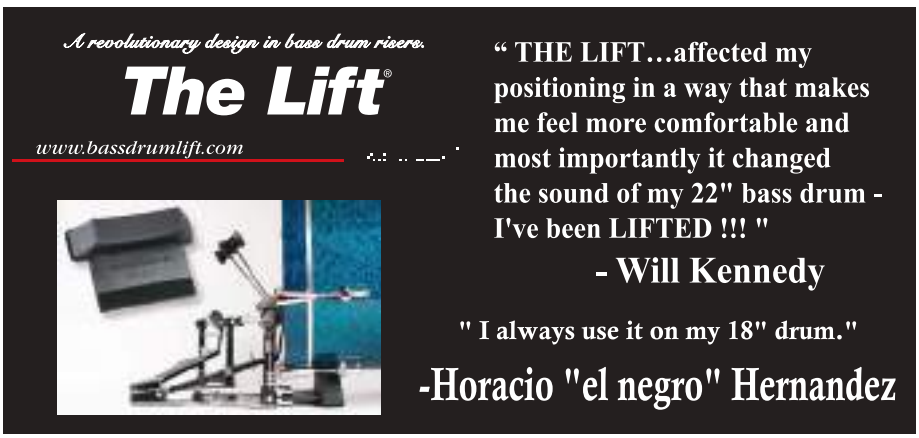
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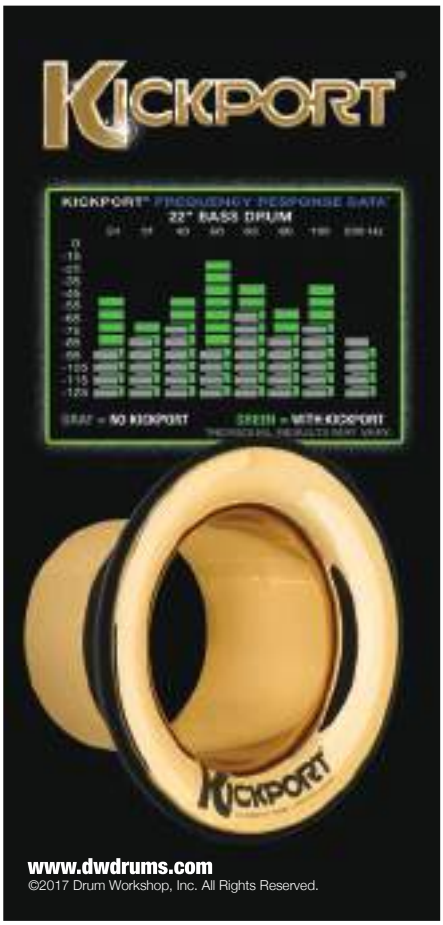
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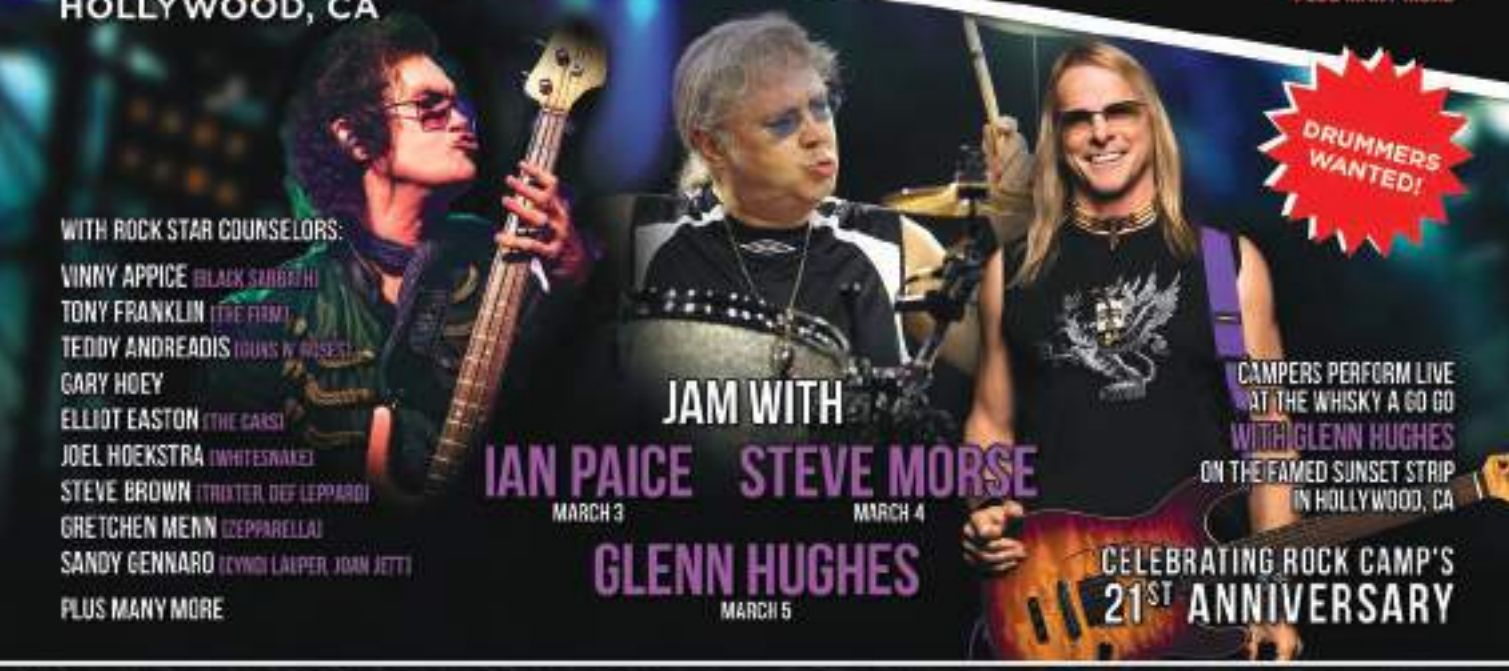

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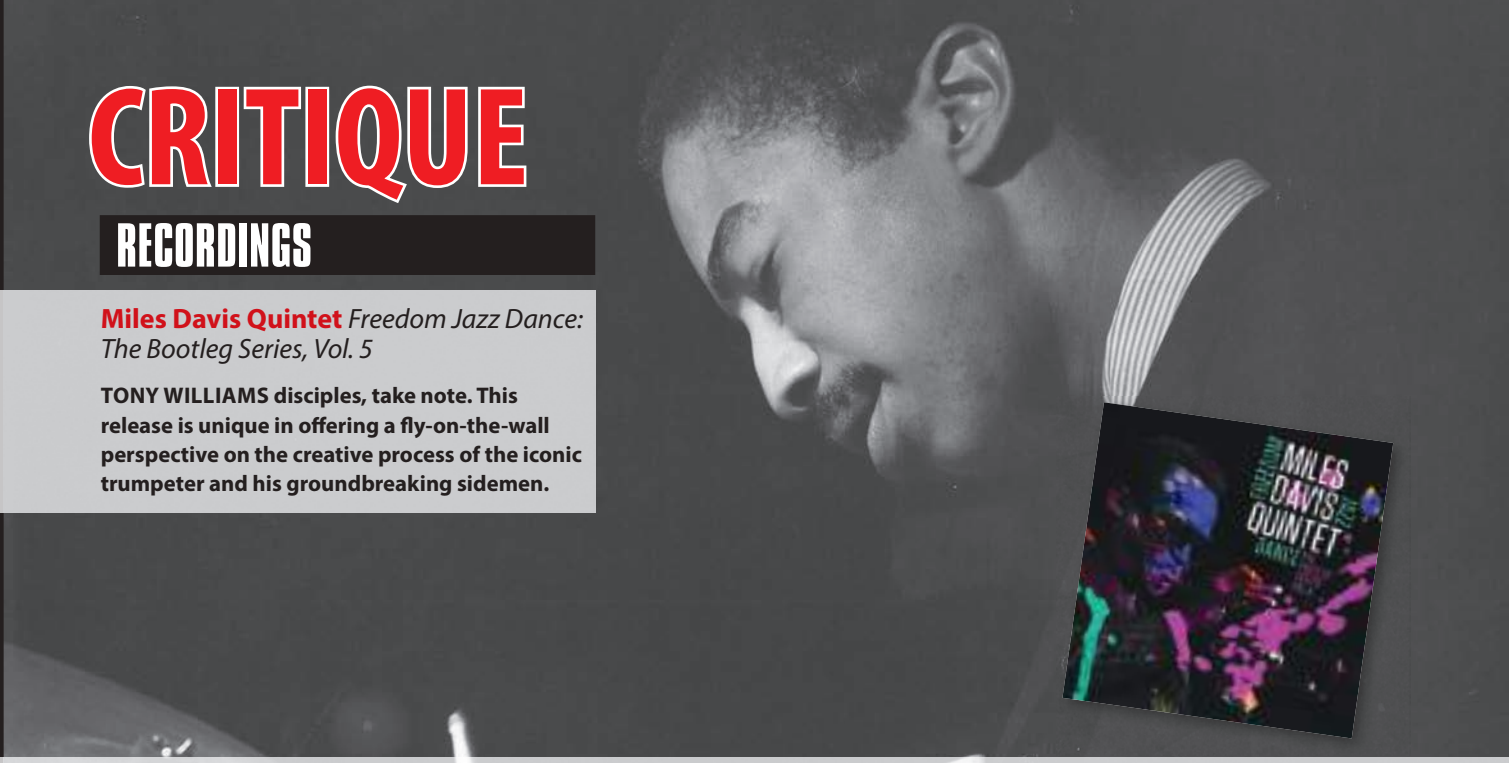


Miles Davis Quintet *Freedom Jazz Dance: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 5*

TONY WILLIAMS disciples, take note. This release is unique in offering a fly-on-the-wall perspective on the creative process of the iconic trumpeter and his groundbreaking sidemen.

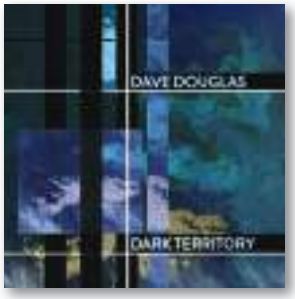
The bulk of this three-disc box set documents 1966-67 recording sessions with Miles Davis's "second great quintet," featuring Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter, and wunderkind Tony Williams. The sessions yielded the ultra-classic *Miles Smiles*, along with tracks inserted into four subsequent discs. Included here are master takes along with complete session reels featuring rehearsals, partial and alternate takes, and studio conversation. Sounds like overkill, but it's entertainingly illuminating. Occasionally, there's struggling with parts (yes, these players *are* mortals). But once it clicks in, it's magic.

There are fascinating Tony moments, as when he initially implies a double-time ride against the 3/4 of "Footprints"—a markedly different approach from his final concept. And there's unexpected humor: Davis instructs Williams to roll between two woodblocks on the title track's opening. A few bars in, Miles rasps, "That's *terrible!*" and Tony speedily replies, "Sure is!"

Ultimately, the reels reveal how utterly *fearless* Tony was in the studio. Diving in with absolute spontaneity, he explores new ideas with every take. You can feel the excitement of a band on the edge of discovery. (Columbia/Legacy) **Jeff Potter**

Donny McCaslin *Beyond Now*
Dave Douglas *Dark Territory*

Two new releases remind us why MARK GUILIANA continues to fascinate.



Following in their momentum as the band behind David Bowie's acclaimed final disc, *Blackstar*, tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin's quartet further explores the futuristic junction of jazz, rock, and electronica in an edgy—and often ominous—soundscape. Although the imaginative, aggressive, and sometimes lyrical McCaslin does pay homage to Bowie with a couple covers, there's no retreading here. In addition to McCaslin's original compositions, there are takes on artists not commonly observed in jazz circles (Deadmau5, Mutemath).

Pioneering drummer Mark Guiliana helms the daunting, throbbing grooves in tandem with bassist Tim Lefebvre and keyboardist Jason Lindner. With his jazz-meets-electronica vision, Guiliana navigates complex time signatures and quirky subdivisions with a finessed yet roiling rock energy. Check out how he whips the title track into a whirlwind. And considering his head-spinning, driving work on "Faceplant," the tune should have been titled "Facemelt." Here's a band with its own internal vocabulary; prepare to be caught off guard. (Motéma)

Compiled from the same sessions that produced 2015's *High Risk*, Dave Douglas's newest slice of electroacoustic subtlety pushes the idea of jazz toward an unknown endgame, with satisfying results. The makeup of the group, with trumpet, electric bass, electronics, and drums, means the music is occasionally wide open and attention to mood is key. Guiliana spends a greater amount of time on electronic sounds and pads than he does on other recent projects, including the McCaslin album, and when he does turn to the acoustic kit, everything he touches sounds wonderfully manipulated and synthetic. Check out his pointillistic, sparse approach on "All the Pretty Horsepower" and "Mission Acropolis," where rhythmic invention buds without heavy chops, and "Ridge Hill" for the blazing, neu-jungle flip side, allowing the drummer to bring in the furious snare/kick combos and bar blurring he's become known for.

With like-minded artists giving him a channel for expression, Guiliana continues to explore the changing role of drums in these electrified settings. (Greenleaf Music)
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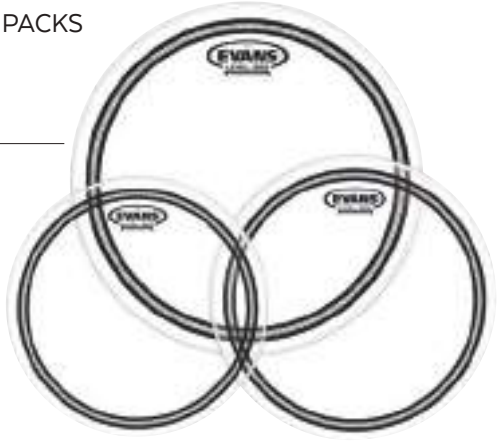

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Critique continued

Xylouris White Black Peak

With a personal relationship that spans decades, this unlikely duo explores the intricacies of musical attraction on its second studio release.

In these very pages, Wilco's Glenn Kotche once recalled experiencing "eureka moments" while witnessing performances by Australian drummer **JIM WHITE** (Dirty Three, Cat Power, PJ Harvey). With this offering, the potential for musical breakthroughs abounds and equates with White's ability to "harmonize" with his longtime friend and recording partner, lutist/vocalist and Crete native Giorgos Xylouris. In the instrumental "Short Rhapsody," White's warbling alternate-sticking patterns threaten to send the piece spiraling into sonic incoherency. Yet, magically, the duo quickly coalesces around multiple compositional ideas in a mutually sympathetic performance. Sometimes White's minor motions mesmerize. The simultaneous hi-hat beats and tom taps in "Forging" and the subtly shifting grooves of the title track provide idiosyncratic rhythmic concepts for casual listeners and surprisingly effective independence exercises for drummers of all stripes. (Bella Union) **Will Romano**

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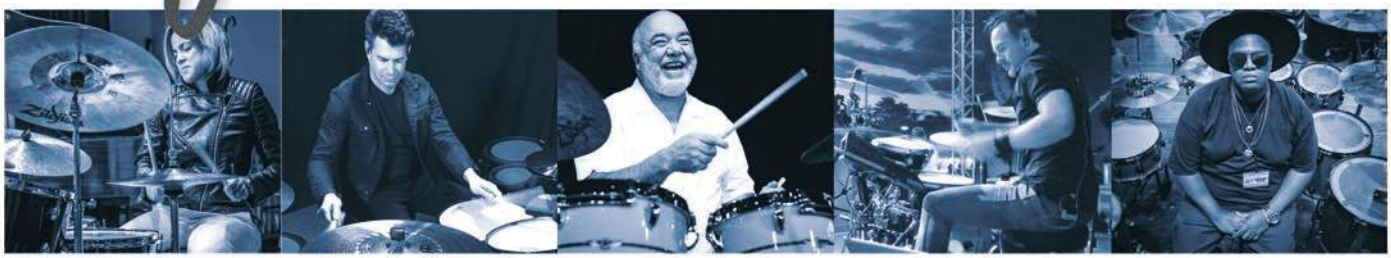

Kimberly Thompson
Kimberly Thompson Quartet

"Every song has its own feeling and its own sound. With e-drums I can program completely different sounding kits for each song and access them at the touch of a button in the studio or on stage."

Johnny Rabb
Collective Soul

"I love acoustic drums and I always will but I can't imagine playing music today without using electronic instruments and technology along side my acoustic kit. Understanding how e-drum modules and software work is essential for me— and every modern musician."

Peter Erskine
Professor USC
ArtistWorks Instructor

"E-Drums form the core of our drumset proficiency program at USC's Thornton School of Music. All contemporary music students are required to take one semester of drumming. We could not teach a classroom of drummers without the electronic kit."

Jonathan Atkinson
Howard Jones/Kim Wilde

"The vast majority of tracks you hear on radio feature some type of programmed drums. Being able to bring those sounds to live music is a key part of my job. Understanding electronic drums is vital to recreating those sounds and, ultimately, keeping the artist and the audience happy."

Stanley Randolph
Stevie Wonder/Tracks

"In order to 'play the record' when I'm on the road, I often have to replicate the recorded drum sounds. I rely on my multipad and triggers to get the job done."

a public service message
epic
www.e-drums.org

Levin Minnemann Rudess
From the Law Offices of Levin Minnemann Rudess

Longtime followers of master drummer MARCO MINNEMANN will rejoice in the fresh, daring, progressive instrumentals this all-star trio creates on its long-awaited second release.

One thing that separates LMR from the prog pack is humor; the group's playful interaction and thoughtful composition are uniquely entertaining. Sometimes dark ("Magistrate"), sometimes old school ("Free Radicals"), sometimes dreamy ("Shiloh's Cat," "Balloon"), sometimes sci-fi ("The Verdict"), and always inventive, the unpredictable prevails on each track. Minnemann takes liberties and takes control, constantly searching for the most creative directions to steer the pulse. His total command of the kit is evident in his blistering double bass mastery, light-speed hands, and odd-meter supremacy. LMR is pure, passionate, forward-thinking prog. (levinminnemannrudess.com) **Mike Haid**

Giraffe Tongue Orchestra *Broken Lines*

Rock vets put their heads, hands, and feet together and create a new animal.

Representing a current trend in heavy rock, Giraffe Tongue Orchestra is a new band composed of members of other successful acts, in this case Alice in Chains, Dillinger Escape Plan, Mastodon, Dethklok, and the Mars Volta. Calling upon a diverse palette of rock skill sets, vocalist William DuVall, guitarists Ben Weinman and Brent Hinds, bassist Pete Griffin, and prog darling **THOMAS PRIDGEN** have put together a highly listenable, straight-ahead rock set that fuses grunge and desert-rock flavors with modern textures. The album's ten tracks benefit highly from Pridgen's muscular playing, with the up-tempo burner "Crucifixion" and standout track "Fragments & Ashes" in particular bearing the signature of his genre-crossing work with the Mars Volta. From *Broken Lines*' opening cut, "Adapt or Die," to its closing title track, Pridgen grabs you and doesn't let go. (Cooking Vinyl) **Ben Meyer**

MULTIMEDIA

Steve Gadd *Way Back Home*

Aided by some very accomplished friends, a legend comes home and delivers a memorable concert.

If Steve Gadd's last couple of records made you itch to see the funky, melodic material worked out on a live stage, this performance document from the 2015 Rochester Jazz Festival, in the drummer's hometown and in his seventieth year, is sure to please. The audio and camera work are excellent, with plenty of shots of Gadd doing his thing, like the soft snare work and hip floor tom accents on "Cavaliero" and the beautiful brushes on "Bye Bye Blackbird." Check out "Way Back Home," where he brings an insistent rimclick backbeat that builds to an explosive climax before a solo filled with all the ghost-note, grooving Gadd-isms we relish. And his band of James Taylor sidemen, masters in their own right, is so good here, it's enough just to hear Gadd comp all day. An eight-song sampler CD and a bonus DVD of interviews make the package a must-own for Gadd aficionados. (BFM Jazz) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

2016 Sydney Vintage and Custom Drum Expo

This past August 14 drum enthusiasts from around Australia gathered at the Factory Theatre in the Marrickville suburb of Sydney, Australia, for the second annual Sydney Vintage and Custom Drum Expo. The show featured vintage gear as well as custom drums mostly built by Australian manufacturers. The event, organized by Australian drummer Andrew Habgood, showcased the continent's newest generation of drum builders alongside many established companies. Members of the local drumming community heard and played the Australian-made instruments and talked with manufacturer reps.

"In Australia we're blessed to have some native timbers that are unique in both appearance and sound," Habgood says. "The first wave of Australian drum-building pioneers brought Australian-made drums to the world stage. Now there is a growing number of bespoke builders that are making a name for themselves using predominantly Australian hardwoods. In this next wave, there's a passion to show the world what local builders can do."

This year's show featured a number of known and up-and-coming Australian builders including Sleishman, Blackbird, Evetts, Moody, Gas, Kentville, Red Rock, Sia, and Pansini, and exhibitors held designated short demo sessions to showcase their products. Evetts presented its new Nic Pettersen Signature snare, a 16-ply Tasmanian blackwood 7x14 masterpiece. Pansini dazzled with a variety of acrylic kits that were outfitted with internal LED lights in various colors. Red Rock exhibited a spectrum of gorgeous Australian hardwoods in their National, Heritage, and Pioneer drumset lines.

Moody and Sia also showed off their fine craftsmanship, exhibiting some beautiful and brilliant-sounding stave hardwood drums with vintage-looking tube lugs. Gas Custom Drums displayed a classic creamy white acrylic kit with an elegant emerald pearl inlay, as well as the company's Moving Coil microphone—a custom acrylic sub-kick low-frequency mic for the bass drum. Sleishman, one of the most established Australian drum companies, continued to thrill with its innovative free-floating suspension system and open drum sound.

Leading international drum and accessory manufacturers including C&C, Craviotto, DW, Gretsch, Ludwig Australia, Pork Pie, Q Drums, Sakae, Truth, Istanbul Agop, Meinl, Murat Diril, TRX, Rodrigo Percussion, AG Painted Drum Heads, Evans, Fat Barry Brown Brushes, Promark, Wincent, Puresound, Tackle Instrument Accessories, Humes & Berg, Pro Tec, SKB, Gibraltar, Lowboy, and Kelly SHU were also featured at the show.

Two auditoriums held performances and clinics throughout the event. Grant Gerathy (John Butler Trio) demonstrated his unique

Goodman

Gerathy

style. Pete Drummond (Dragon, Thirsty Merc, the Drum Chop Shop YouTube channel) laid down some of his incredible technique. Dave Goodman (the Dave Goodman Trio, Trioflight) performed his fresh and exciting jazz fusion tunes. And Corey Mills (Tanya George from *The Voice*) and renowned performer/educator Roby Corelli held a groove workshop. Each artist brought an impressive and inspirational demonstration of skill, technique, and musicality.

This year introduced a vintage showcase competition to the show, delighting vintage drum players and collectors. Standouts from the 1950s to the 1970s included drumsets from George Way, Leedy & Ludwig, Gretsch, Premier, Ludwig, Rogers, and Camco, as well as various Drouyn sets courtesy of the Drum Cartel retailer and lesson center.

Text by Bob Campbell
Photos by Michael Zaluzny and Steve Crawley

Blue Öyster Cult's *Agents of Fortune*

Thank *Saturday Night Live* for making the hypnotic "tock-tock-tock-tock" pulsing through Blue Öyster Cult's "(Don't Fear) the Reaper" the most famous cowbell part in the history of song, a distinction that is both a blessing and a curse.

On the one hand, "(Don't Fear) the Reaper" has kept B.Ö.C.—a hard rock band that bikers, rock critics, and record-store nerds can all seem to agree on—and drummer Albert Bouchard's percussive prowess alive in the public's consciousness. At the same time, since the much-beloved "More Cowbell!" sketch debuted on *SNL* in 2000, it's impossible to hear the eerie "Reaper" without thinking of Will Ferrell banging out that part in his two-sizes-too-small shirt as Christopher Walken pleads for more.

With decidedly less fodder for comedy sketches based on incidental percussion parts elsewhere on 1976's *Agents of Fortune*, the album that spawned "Reaper," we can focus on why Bouchard was the ideal drummer for a unit often dubbed "the thinking man's heavy metal band." It's a label B.Ö.C. earned by infusing arena-ready boogie that owed a debt to punk progenitors like the MC5 with sci-fi and fantasy-based lyrics ripe for dissection in creative-writing classes.

B.Ö.C. seemed as though it was still figuring out how metal, blues, or prog it wanted to be on its first three albums, leaving Bouchard with a lot of ground to cover. This inspired some busy and ambitious kit work on early jams like "Cities on Flame with Rock and Roll" and "Seven Screaming Diz-Busters" (you're encouraged to check out the 1975 live album *On Your Feet or On Your Knees* to hear killer versions of both).

By the time the band members got to making *Agents of Fortune*, they refined their idiosyncrasies into a beautifully weird sound that didn't demand playing-to-the-back-row shredding. Bouchard adapted by morphing from a hybrid pulverizer/technician to a song-first player who made sure the backline (which he held down with his brother Joe on bass) was delivering what B.Ö.C.'s twin-guitar and keyboards frontline required.

A lot of the drummer's work here focuses on small details and simple parts geared toward supporting the song. Sure, *SNL* mined comedy gold from that cowbell part in "Reaper," but those metronomic quarter notes (played by Bouchard with a timpani mallet) are a key component. They sit strategically buried in the mix and just on top of the beat, subliminally focusing the listener on the elements of the song's soft and spacey wall of sound: the cycling arpeggio guitar part, the ethereal organ, the near-constant harmony vocal, and Bouchard's 18" Paiste flat ride, which shimmers throughout the verses just as hypnotically as the infamous cowbell. And on the heavier end of things, the dumbed-down "boom-boom-*bap*, boom-boom-*bap*" beat he puts to "E.T.I. (Extra Terrestrial Intelligence)" creates the perfect pocket for the song's note-heavy guitar riff. When Bouchard slips in a few slick snare fills just before the heavenly choruses pop, it's an especially sweet payoff.

Such sensitivity to the song and the arrangement makes sense, since Bouchard wasn't just B.Ö.C's drummer. He was an integral part of the band's songwriting brain trust, either writing or cowriting half of the ten songs that appear on *Agents of Fortune*, and singing lead on "The Revenge of Vera Gemini" and "Sinful Love."

Lyrically, those two songs share themes of deception, murder, and lust. Musically they couldn't be more different, and Bouchard delivers ace song-centric performances on both. "Revenge," featuring a spoken-word intro and backing vocals from Patti Smith, is a spooky shuffle with Bouchard's kick drum pattern bouncing along in perfect lockstep with his brother's bass line. On "Sinful Love"—a burner that wouldn't have sounded out of place on an Iggy Pop record of that era—Bouchard digs in hard without overpowering the song's pure-evil falsetto chorus. The combination of Bouchard's restraint and a dead, flat drum sound (heard throughout much of the album) gives the song a sonic intimacy that's a few shades darker than a lot of smash-and-grab hard rock of the times.

Most everything Bouchard plays on *Agents of Fortune*, from those cowbell clunks in "Reaper" to the hard-driving pulse in "This Ain't the Summer of Love," fits this slab of thinking man's metal perfectly, like a hand throwing up devil horns inside a black leather fingerless glove. It's classic drumming on a truly classic album.

Patrick Berkery

***Agents of Fortune* (1976)**
This Ain't the Summer of Love • True Confessions • (Don't Fear) the Reaper • E.T.I. (Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) • The Revenge of Vera Gemini • Sinful Love • Tattoo Vampire • Morning Final • Tenderloin • Debbie Denise

Eric Bloom: guitar, vocals
Donald "Buck Dharma" Roeser: guitar, vocals
Allen Lanier: keyboards, guitar, bass, vocals
Joe Bouchard: bass, piano, vocals
Albert Bouchard: drums, vocals
Produced by Murray Krugman, Sandy Pearlman, and David Lucas

Hot Stuff

More…"Reaper." There's so much to love in this song. Bouchard's exits and entrances when the action halts are consistently tasteful. His two kick drum hits when the band drops out after the first chorus make the perfect bridge from the soloed arpeggio guitar part to the band reentering. And that middle section is nuts, as Bouchard builds from the hi-hat accents to the half-time feel to the 16th-note snare pattern/cymbal combination to, ultimately, a graceful collapse. It's a drum solo within a guitar solo, and it's brilliant.

Disco prog? "Tenderloin" is B.Ö.C. at its most Steely Dan. Or B.Ö.C. at its most Genesis. Or B.Ö.C. at its most Sparks. You get the idea: This ambitious deep cut defies categorization. Bouchard excels at navigating the song's choppy changes. His straight-16th-note pulse allows the modulating hooks to really soar. And his syncopated stops and crazy fills as the song starts morphing into disco-prog territory harken back to the band's early days.

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KIT OF THE MONTH

Cocktail Convenience

For Toronto-based drummer Sekou Lumumba, this simplified rig packs more than enough punch into a small space when backing such artists as Canadian multi-platinum songwriter Serena Ryder. And when first thinking about his approach to this kit, the drummer considered its setup time to be as important as its sound.

"Although DW offers a cocktail kit in a larger diameter, I wanted something that would be easier to set up, tear down, and transport," Lumumba says. "So in lieu of their 18" split bass drum/floor tom with a 12" tom and snare, I asked them to make me one solid 15" bass drum with a 10" tom and snare." Besides the drums, Lumumba also fits two sets of hi-hats, a crash cymbal, and a jam block into the setup. "It may look like a lot of weight, but believe it or not, the main shell supports all of the drums, hardware, and cymbals easily. I've used this kit for five years without any issue."

The kick drum/floor tom features a Kelly SHU bass drum mic mounting system below the batter head, which according to Lumumba adds another level of convenience. "Our sound guy only has to plug in via an XLR connection on the side," the drummer explains. "And I never tire of the looks I get while setting up this kit versus the looks I get when people hear how much the cocktail setup sounds like a full, standard drumset."

Lumumba toured extensively with the kit and played it on various TV shows, including *The Queen Latifah Show*. "Not many people know that Queen Latifah is also an avid drummer, and when she saw this kit during soundcheck, she came over to ask me a dozen questions about it," Lumumba says. "She even stood off-camera during our performance to see exactly how I was playing it!"

You can check out a video of Lumumba playing the kit on *The Queen Latifah Show* by searching YouTube for "Serena Ryder Queen Latifah."

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